

# THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF ST. BUNNYCRISP

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A [minor] dissertation submitted in [*partial*] *fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of  
the degree of Master's in Screenwriting

Faculty of the Humanities

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**WORKING TITLE:**

The Transmogrification of St. Bunnychrisp

**GENRE:**

Fantasy Adventure

**FORMAT:**

90 minute feature film

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

6 to 12 year old girls – family film – possible parental guidance

**WRITTEN BY:**

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**WGA SCRIPT REGISTRATION NUMBER:**

A201120001E\_21\_01\_16\_0478

**TAGLINE:**

Sometimes friends come in funny forms.

**LOGLINE:**

A 10 year old girl befriends the monster in her closet and in doing so finds the courage to stand up to her bully.

**PREMISE:**

Into the life of cowardly Poppy comes a scary 6 foot tall talking rabbit whose job it is to give bullies a taste of their own medicine. But Poppy is a good girl, it's Jessica who's mean, who makes Poppy's life miserable, who gave Poppy the stupid rabbit as a 10<sup>th</sup> birthday present in the first place! But then he was just a soft-toy; not this monster in her closet. Did St. Bunnychrisp get sent to the wrong girl? On the way to finding the answers to these questions Poppy and St. Bunnychrisp become best friends and go on adventures in a parallel fantasy realm. That is until St. Bunnychrisp's fate is threatened by the cruel Icemaiden, and Poppy will have to find the courage to save her friends' lives on her own.

THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF ST. BUNNYCRISP

by

Cate Wood Hunter

HNTCAT003

Presented in fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Master's in Screenwriting

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2016

Supervisor: Dr Alexia Smit

WGSA SCRIPT REGISTRATION NUMBER  
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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. THE SOBUKWE HOME - BACK GARDEN TERRACE - DAY

A Victorian double-storey Townhouse, (Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa) It is Poppy Sobukwe's 10th birthday party - the theme is 19th Century French Fairground. The scene is story-book idyllic.

Within a semi-circle of LITTLE STRIPED TENTS a PIERROT is performing acrobatics and magic tricks, while a PIERRETTE with a troupe of LITTLE DOGS parades around him, enthralling their small audience of CHILDREN.

Poppy (our 10 year old biracial petite poppet) looking picture perfect, greets her GUESTS (children around the age of 10, boys and girls - chocolate, cream and caramel - they are the children of South Africa's rainbow nation) as they arrive.

Poppy embraces her friends shyly and receives their GIFTS with an almost bob-like curtsy.

Poppy triples on tippy-toes to the GIFT TABLE bearing her gifts.

The newly arrived guests join the other children watching the performers.

Poppy's mother - GRACE SOBUKWE (a 40-something, elegant, neat and attractive white, British-born English woman) takes the gift from her, with a smile and nod at Poppy. Grace then indicates with a wave that Poppy should go and greet the next group of friends arriving.

Grace places the gift on the table, reads the CARD and writes the giver's name in a NOTEBOOK. She looks up to see her husband spying on her actions via his CELLPHONE / PAD DIGITAL CAMERA.

JOHN SOBUKWE (a robust and handsome Xhosa man in his mid- 40's, comfortable in his own skin and the world) looks up from the screen and gives his wife a bemused smile and nods at the notebook.

Grace returns a wry smile to John, and shrugs.

John returns his attention to the LCD screen and lifts it up to capture Poppy greeting her best friends.



Poppy embraces FATIMA (a plump, solemn Indian girl with an old worldly wisdom and calmness) and MOIRA (a small and bird-like, hyperactive, bottle-glasses wearing Jewish girl) in big hugs.

Lagging behind are FATIMA's MOM (an elegant business woman dressed in business attire appropriate to a modern Muslim woman) and MOIRA'S MOM (a Jewish intellectual with wild greying hair, wearing an odd assortment of clothing including a NUSAS T-shirt), they are engaged in an animated discussion.

John watches on his LCD screen as Grace goes over to greet the two mothers while the girls race over to see the Pierrot and Pierrette troupe.

EXT. NEXT TO THE GIFT TABLE, TERRACE - A LITTLE LATER, DAY

Poppy is sitting on the grass unwrapping her gifts, surrounded by the children, facing and closest to her are Fatima and Moira.

MOIRA

Come on POP-pee-eee, just rip it open!

John is about to agree when Grace gives him a warning look. John ducks his head down to focus on the LCD screen while trying to swallow a smile.

Poppy opens the gift. It is a complete Harry Potter DVD BOX SET, all the children let out murmurs of approval.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

You like? You like? I'm sure now you're ten you won't be too scared to watch.

Poppy gives her a big hug.

Grace writes down 'Harry Potter DVD Box set' under "GIFT" next to "Moira" under the category "FROM" in her notebook.

Grace takes the box set and places it with the other unwrapped presents (books, dvd's, cd's, and art and craft kits) on display on the table.

Grace folds the wrapping paper carefully and places it on a pile to the side of the gifts.

Fatima pushes her present forward to Poppy.

FATIMA

This one first.

Poppy unwraps the gift, it is a clunky multicolored hand-made CANDLE with the number '10' formed out of brass pin tacks on the side.

FATIMA (CONT'D)  
You see? I made it myself!

Poppy looks up to express her thanks to Fatima when she is distracted by Moira looking towards the house. Poppy then looks at Fatima.

FATIMA (CONT'D)  
My mommy says home-made shows how much you...

Fatima stops mid-sentence, her eyes widen and unconsciously she reaches for Moira's hand. Moira grasps Fatima's hand.

JESSICA, ZINZI and KIMERA (tweeny Gossip Girl wannabe's), step through the French doors out onto the terrace.

Zinzi is carrying a LARGE PARCEL wrapped in expensive paper and tied up with a gigantic bow. The girls pause and strike a pose.

Fatima and Moira look at each other, then look at Poppy.

Poppy twists around to see who has arrived, then gulps down a swallow.

The three newcomers strut across the terrace.

Jessica comes to a halt next to Poppy and looks down at her. Poppy looks down into her lap.

JESSICA  
Happy B-day Popsy!  
(Pause, pose and smile -  
check!)  
So glad we could make it in time  
for the prezzies.

Jessica hands her clutch to Kimera. She then holds out her hands and Zinzi deposits the present into them.

John watches this exchange via the LCD screen.

Jessica picks the candle out of Poppy's hand and deposits it onto the table.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
So Poppy, happy birthday.

Jessica bends down from her lofty height and places the present into Poppy's lap.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
(Looking into Poppy's  
eyes)  
We chose it especially for you.

CUT TO:

EXT. A FUN PARK - NIGHT

An ugly white SOFT-TOY RABBIT glares balefully out from amass of similarly large, ugly, cheap soft-toys on a shelf in a SHARP-SHOOTER BOOTH.

Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera are watching a SHARP-SHOOTER BOY about to take his turn at shooting. He is big for his age and brutish; a mouth-breather, a blunt instrument. He stares open-mouthed at Jessica.

Sharp-Shooter Boy then turns and points at the rabbit.

SHARP-SHOOTER BOY  
(Trying to speak through  
his breaking voice)  
You sure...  
(Squawk! He clears his  
throat and tries again.)  
You want that one?

KIMERA  
Yes! It's so cute!

ZINZI  
And you know what cute means?

Sharp-Shooter Boy shakes his head.

ZINZI (CONT'D)  
It means ugly, but fascinating... a  
bit like... you!

JESSICA  
If you get me that rabbit I'll...

Jessica looks at Zinzi and Kimera and they exchange sly smiles.

Sharp-Shooter Boy raises the gun and focuses, locking eyes with the toy rabbit.

Sharp-Shooter Boy squeezes the trigger slowly and surely, then fires in quick succession, hitting all the moving targets in a row.

The SHARP-SHOOTER BOOTH ATTENDANT extracts the rabbit from the shelf and hands it to the boy.

Sharp-Shooter Boy hands the rabbit over to Jessica.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
(Smiling simperingly)  
Say thank-you!

SHARP-SHOOTER BOY  
What? But I got it for you... you  
should say thank-you.

JESSICA  
That's what I said.  
(Taking a big breath.)  
I said...  
(Making quotation marks in  
the air)  
if you get me that bunny I'll...  
(pause)  
say thank-you. And I just did, so  
don't expect me to do it again!

Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera high-five, snap and walk off laughing, leaving Sharp-Shooter boy behind, mouth open.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
It's perfect, and I can just see  
her like "Oh, you got me a toy  
rabbit, it's so cute". As if. She's  
such a baby, it's pathetic.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SOBUKWE HOME - BACK GARDEN TERRACE - DAY

Jessica straightens up, crinkles up her nose and smiles at the other children.

JESSICA (CONT.)  
(In a baby voice)  
It's so cute, just like our little  
Poppy here.

Jessica pats Poppy on the head.

John lowers the LCD screen and looks up, trying to work out the dynamic. Although he can't put his finger on it, something is amiss and he is not happy about it.

GRACE  
(To Poppy)  
Well open it up darling.

Poppy looks imploringly to Moira and Fatima for help

FATIMA  
Um... maybe it's time for some  
cupcakes?

JESSICA  
Don't worry about us, please. We  
don't need cake - we wouldn't want  
to get fat would we?

Focusing on Fatima, Zinzi and Kimera shake their heads slowly and surely. Fatima squirms.

GRACE  
Okay, um, we can have cake after  
all the presents are open then.

Swallowing a sigh, Poppy opens the present slowly with trembling fingers. Jessica bends down and rips the paper open.

JESSICA  
Don't be silly Poppy; it's just  
stupid paper!

Some of the children let out little gasps.

Seeing Jessica's action John glances sharply at Grace. Grace  
is flustered but does not know how to deal with it.

Poppy pulls the rest of the paper open and the rabbit from the  
Sharp-Shooter Booth is revealed.

JESSICA CONT'D.  
You see? A cotton tail for Flopsy,  
Mopsy and Popsy.

All the children stare at the rabbit in Poppy's lap in silence.  
Grace looks around at the group.

GRACE  
(Swooping down and picking  
up the rabbit)  
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 Look at you, you just a big, cuddly  
 bunny wabbit!

Poppy looks up at her mother then drops her head in despairing embarrassment.

Grace puts the rabbit on the gift table next to the candle and the pile of gift-paper.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 Now you can watch over the party!

Jessica then spies the candle.

JESSICA  
 Oh, look! A home-made candle.  
 (Turning around to face  
 the group of children.)  
 Who is this from?

Fatima puts up her hand uncertainly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
 Aw, how sweet!

Jessica picks up a BOX OF MATCHES from the table and before anyone can stop her she lights the candle.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
 Look Poppy you can use it at night,  
 that is, if you're still scared of  
 the dark?  
 (Turning back to the  
 guests.)  
 Oh I must tell you such a funny  
 story, about the time Poppy came to  
 sleep over and I hid in the  
 cupboard. I know, so childish, but  
 it was two years ago and I WAS ONLY  
 ten...

MOIRA  
 CAKE! Every body CAKE!

GRACE  
 Moira, Jessica was just about to  
 tell a story.

JESSICA  
 Thank-you Aunty Grace, its okay, I  
 can tell them all at school, any  
 time.  
 (Beat)  
 Can't I Poppy?

Poppy glowers at Jessica and bites her lip.

GRACE

Right, yes of course, good. Okay,  
so come along everyone, let's get  
some cake.

The children clamber up and race towards the cupcake booth.

Grace reaches out and takes hold of Jessica gently by the arm.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Jessy, I'm sorry about your parents  
divorce. How are you?

JESSICA

It's Jessica now. And don't be  
sorry. I mean; now I get the best  
of both worlds.

Jessica pulls her arm away and saunters off with Zinzi and  
Kimera, she rolls her eyes at them.

EXT. THE SOBUKWE HOME - BACK GARDEN TERRACE - A LITTLE LATER,  
DAY

The children, with plates of half-eaten cupcake on their laps,  
are seated in a semi-circle watching Pierrot, Pierrette and the  
dogs performing in the middle.

Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera are standing at the back of the group.  
Jessica does a mime of being bored. A few of the children around  
her giggle nervously. As she draws a deep breath to mime a yawn  
she stops, then sniffs the air.

JESSICA

Ew! What is that smell? I smell  
something burning!

Everyone starts sniffing the air and confirm that they too,  
smell something burning. Mild chaos breaks out as Pierrot,  
Pierrette, John and Grace start running around to check what it  
could be.

The dogs pick up on the excitement and run around barking.

Kimera glances over her shoulder at the gift table.

KIMERA

(Gasping, then calling out  
and pointing.)  
It's the presents, THE PRESENTS ARE  
ON FIRE!

EXT. NEXT TO THE GIFT TABLE, TERRACE - A LITTLE LATER, DAY  
The presents are a smouldering pile. The only thing to have survived is the toy rabbit. The edges of his ears and patches of his fur are singed. Wisps of smoke rise gently out of his body.

Only Fatima and Moira, their mothers, Poppy, John and Grace remain - surveying the wrecked pile of gifts.

Fatima is crying and Grace has her arm around her shoulder. Poppy stands by awkwardly.

GRACE  
Don't cry sweetie, nonsense, it's  
not your fault.

FATIMA  
It is! It was my candle that  
started the fire... I'm so so-so-  
sorry Poppy.

GRACE  
(To everyone)  
Let's not blow this out of  
proportion.  
(To Fatima)  
No one got hurt and we all had a  
good time before that.  
(To Poppy)  
Didn't we? Poppy?

Poppy slowly nods her head. She looks at the rabbit and narrows her eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
(To Fatima)  
There you go. Think nothing more of  
it!

FATIMA  
But Poppy didn't even get to open  
my other present.  
(Turning to Poppy)  
It was...

FATIMA'S MOTHER  
(Interjecting and cutting  
her daughter off.)  
No! Don't tell her, we will get  
another one.

Fatima's mom turns to Poppy.



FATIMA'S MOTHER (CONT'D)  
That way you still have another  
present to look forward to.

Moirira looks up pleadingly at her mother, her mother nods back.

MOIRIRA  
(Beaming at Poppy)  
And we'll get you another present,  
maybe the same, maybe different,  
you'll have to wait and see.

Poppy tries to give her friends a smile. John  
puts an arm around Poppy and hugs her.

JOHN  
Who's my brave little *tshontsho*?

Poppy does not answer.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT  
Poppy's bedroom is tastefully and beautifully decorated. On  
the desk beside her bed is a large ornate DOLL'S HOUSE, but as  
she has grown out of dolls it now serves as the home for her  
pet dormouse.

Poppy is lying awake in her bed in the dark.

Soft SCUFFLING, SNUFFLING and SQUEAKING noises coming from the  
doll house.

Poppy sighs and rolls over to face the wall. Poppy looks at the  
wall. Tears well up in her eyes. Poppy closes her eyes.

A slight creak is heard in the room.

Poppy's eyes fly open. She waits.

Poppy turns over very, very slowly.

Poppy's eyes scan the room, they come to a stop, arrested at  
the site of the CUPBOARD.

The cupboard door is ajar. Poppy stares at it. She draws the  
sheets up to her eyes.

INT. INSIDE POOPY'S CUPBOARD - NIGHT

FROM THE TOP SHELF'S P.O.V. OF POPPY

Poppy whimpers; the cupboard door creaks open a fraction more.  
Poppy sits bolt upright in bed and screams.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER, NIGHT

John is sitting next to Poppy on the bed, rocking her in his arms as he strokes her head and soothes her sobs away.

JOHN (CONT.)  
Tula, tula my chicken, my little  
*tshontsho*. Daddy's here.  
(Pulling back)  
What was it? A nightmare?

Poppy raises her arm and points at the cupboard

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Poppy Vuyo, I thought you were over  
this.

Poppy continues to stare fixedly at the cupboard.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
Okay you stay in bed and I'll show  
you.

John walks over to the wardrobe.

POPPY  
(Released from her trance  
into a panic)  
No! No! Careful daddy!

John stops just in front of the wardrobe and turns to face Poppy.

JOHN  
There's nothing to be afraid of.

Reaching behind him, John opens the door. The rabbit tumbles out of the cupboard onto John's head. Caught off guard, John ducks, fumbles and catches the rabbit. John straightens up and regains his composure.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(Teasingly)  
Look, it's just your bunny wabbit.

He brings the rabbit over to the bed and seats it on the pillow next to Poppy.

Poppy pulls back into the corner.

Grace comes into the room carrying a nursery NIGHT-LIGHT.

GRACE  
Didn't think we'd need this again  
hey Poppy?

Grace plugs it in and switches it on. The room is lit with a silhouette of a merry-go round proceeding silently around the walls.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Now that your bunny is here to  
protect you, I think we should give  
him a name... don't you?

Poppy remains silent.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
I think we should call him, mmm...  
St. Bunnychrisp! How about that? He  
can be your patron saint, protect  
you against all your nightmares.  
How about that?

Poppy gives St. Bunnychrisp a baleful look and then shifts her gaze to her mother.

JOHN  
Well, I think you should get some  
sleep. Another big day tomorrow -  
the Eisteddfod!

John gives her a kiss and exits.

Grace comes over to tuck Poppy in.

GRACE  
What is it darling? Is it the  
presents?

POPPY  
(Vehemently and angrily.)  
It's NOT about the presents!

GRACE  
Good grief Poppy! What's got into  
you?

POPPY  
It's, it's...

Poppy grabs the rabbit and thrusts it towards Grace.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
It's this stinky rabbit!

GRACE  
What about it?

POPPY  
It's ugly and stupid and now it smells. And you just don't give a stupid old soft-toy for a tenth birthday. IT'S FOR BABIES!

GRACE  
POPPY! Calm down. You're going to lose your voice for tomorrow. And quiet frankly young lady, I do not appreciate your tone. I know he's a bit smoky now, but I'll wash him, then he'll be fine.

POPPY  
You just don't get it do you? They were being mean!

GRACE  
That's enough! You heard Jessica, she said they chose it especially for you! And think about that - with all that she's going through with her parent's divorce, she still took the time to choose a present for you.

Grace gets up and takes the rabbit; she walks to the door, pauses, and looks back at Poppy.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Now get some sleep and tomorrow I want you back to your sweet self again, right missy?

Grace exits, closing the door behind her. Poppy flops back and pulls the sheets over her head.

CUT TO:

ST. BUNNYCRISP GLARING OUT OF THE PORTAL WINDOW OF THE WASHING MACHINE DOOR AS HE SPINS ROUND AND ROUND.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy's backpack is packed and on the desk. St. Bunnychrisp has been placed on the windowsill behind the desk. Poppy is neatly dressed in her school uniform.

She opens up the doll's house and reaching in she gently lifts out a little sleepy DORMOUSE, which she snuggles and kisses.

POPPY

Good morning my sweet little Pixel  
- how's my favourite creature in  
the whole wide world? Ooh I just  
love you, my sweet little ting.

GRACE O.S.

Poppy Sobukwe?

Poppy puts Pixel carefully back into her house and places a platter of fruit and cheese inside Pixel's house; she strokes Pixel and then closes up the doll house.

GRACE O.S. (CONT'D)

We're going to be late.

Poppy grabs her bag and runs to the door, she pauses, half looks over her shoulder, then gives a little shake of her head and runs out the room.

St. Bunnycrisp is no longer on the windowsill.

INT. A CORRIDOR OF THE ARTSCAPE THEATRE - DAY  
MUSIC EISTEDTFORD

Poppy's all-girl SCHOOL CHOIR is lining up and as Jessica is the tallest girl, she is at the front of the queue and Poppy, as one of the shortest, is near the end. The CHOIR MISTRESS is walking up and down the line checking in on the GIRLS.

Jessica looks down the line of girls till her eyes reach Poppy. Jessica smirks at Poppy.

Poppy tries to swallow, struggles, tries to clear her throat and makes a rasping sound.

The Choir Mistress spins around and looks with alarmed concern at Poppy.

Poppy points to her throat.

JESSICA

(Calling from the front of  
the queue)

If Poppy has lost her voice I can  
always take her part Miss.

CHOIR MISTRESS

(Loudly)

Thank-you Jessica, I don't think  
that will be necessary.

(Quieter to Poppy)

Will it Poppy?

Poppy shakes her head; she pulls out a water bottle from the  
side pocket of her backpack, and has a long drink from it.

CHOIR MISTRESS CONT.

Not too much, we don't want you  
running off to the toilet in the  
middle of the recital, now do we?

The girls near Poppy all stifle giggles. Poppy hangs her head  
and puts the bottle back in the pocket.

JESSICA

Well if that happens...

CHOIR MISTRESS

(Calling back to Jessica)

Yes thank-you Jessica!

(To Poppy)

All better?

Poppy clears her throat, swallows and nods.

Jessica gives Poppy a scowl and swivels away.

CHOIR MISTRESS (CONT'D)

Right well, let's just check that.

Okay girls, let's warm up.

She blows a note into a TUNING FLUTE, and then indicates to  
Poppy to pick up the note.

Poppy takes a breath and picks up the note pure and true.

The Choir mistress breathes a sigh of relief and then indicates  
for the rest of the girls to pick up their cue.

INT. CENTRAL AUDITORIUM OF ARTSCAPE - A LITTLE LATER, DAY

The auditorium is packed with PARENTS and other RELATIVES and  
the CHILDREN who will be competing. In the front is a row of  
JUDGES. John and Grace are seated fourth row from the front.

Poppy is in the middle of the front row of the choir on stage.

The song arrives at Poppy's solo and Poppy opens her mouth, no sound comes out. She looks around in panic. A second passes.

Jessica swoops swiftly in. Poppy

fight back her tears.

John and Grace exchange concerned looks; John squeezes Grace's hand.

INT. LADIES WASHROOM, ARTSCAPE - A LITTLE LATER, DAY

Poppy bursts through the door into the washroom and skids to a halt.

She surveys the large empty washroom, and then quickly drops to a crouch.

Poppy looks under the stall walls to see if they are all empty - they are.

She hesitates for a second and then runs into the closest stall.

INT. TOILET STALL, ARTSCAPE - DAY CONTINUOUS

Poppy flings the door shut and locks it.

She takes her backpack off and puts it on the floor; it topples over and falls under the door.

INT. THE LADIES WASHROOM, ARTSCAPE - DAY

Poppy's backpack flops open and a pair of white ears pops out between the flap and bag.

INT. TOILET STALL, ARTSCAPE - DAY

Poppy takes a few deep breaths and then bursts into tears.

INT. LADIES WASHROOM, ARTSCAPE - DAY

Poppy flushes the toilet, the lock slides open and Poppy opens the toilet stall door.

Poppy sees the rabbit ears sticking out of the backpack. Poppy's eyebrows rise in surprise, then crunch together in confusion.

The door to the washroom bursts open, and in pour Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera, laughing.

Poppy grabs her backpack and slings it over her shoulder. Poppy tries to duck back into the toilet stall.

Jessica looks up and sees Poppy.

Poppy freezes like a rabbit trapped in headlights.

JESSICA  
Hello Poopy!

Poppy swallows and her shoulders droop. The backpack slides off her shoulder and swings forward revealing the white ears.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Oh look.

This is too good to be true, Jessica can hardly contain herself.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
(To Zinzi and Kimera)  
She brought her bunny wabbit. Must be to keep her company. In her new home. In the toilets. Where she belongs.

Zinzi high-fives Jessica and Kimera cracks up with laughter.

Poppy looks at Jessica and slowly shakes her head.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Then what's this!  
(Grabbing St. Bunnychrisp from the backpack by the ears like a magician.)  
Abracadabra! Liar, liar, pants on fire.  
(Moving in on Poppy)  
And you know what happens to little girls who play with fire? They wet their beds.  
(Stepping back and looking at Zinzi and Kimera)  
Oh, wait, she does that already!

Jessica, Kimera and Zinzi pack out laughing.

Poppy begins to tear up again but she fights against this. She tries to push past Jessica.

Jessica blocks Poppy.



Poppy's bottom lip begins to trembles, she scrunches her mouth closed to stop herself from crying.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
This little piggy went whaa whaa  
whaa all the way home...

JESSICA, ZINZI & KIMERA  
(All three closing in on  
Poppy)  
Whaa, whaa, whaa, whaa, whaa...

Poppy backs into the stall and gives a little whimper.

The washroom door opens and Grace enters.

Jessica, Kimera and Zinzi spin around.

By the time Jessica is facing Grace she is hugging St. Bunnychrisp and has pasted a sincere look of concern on her face.

Grace takes in the scene with some confusion.

GRACE  
(To Poppy)  
There you are Poppett!

JESSICA  
Aunty Grace! We were just telling  
Poppy how bad we felt for her.

Jessica touches her heart and looks at Zinzi and Kimera, but they cannot meet her eyes.

Zinzi and Kimera look down at the floor, no smiles on their faces.

Jessica steps up to Grace, hands St. Bunnychrisp over, and leaves the bathroom.

Kimera and Zinzi scuttle off behind her.

Grace looks down at St. Bunnychrisp then looks up at Poppy and smiles holding the soft-toy out to Poppy.

Poppy glares at Grace from the toilet stall and then comes charging out past her mother.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Poppy is sitting in bed, arms folded defiantly.

John is standing holding a TRAY with her supper plates on it.

JOHN

You sure you don't want to join us?

POPPY

NO! Not until she APOLOGIZES!

JOHN

Poppy if your mother says she  
didn't put that rabbit in your bag  
then she didn't put the rabbit in  
the bag.

POPPY

Then who did? YOU?

John looks at her, puts the tray down on the desk.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I'm not hungry - I don't want it.  
Take it away!

JOHN

(With a shake of his head)  
This is not the nice girl we raised  
you to be.

John exits, closing the door behind him.

POPPY

(Glowering, then through  
gritted teeth)  
I DON'T CARE! You as BAD as MOM. I  
wish you would both just LEAVE ME  
ALONE!

Poppy picks St. Bunnychrisp up from the desk and throws him at  
the closed door.

She puts her bedside light off, refolds her arms and sits  
scowling in the half-light of the night-light.

ST. BUNNYCRISP O.S.

(In a gruff, gravelly voice  
with a snide tone)  
Mm-mm, that is not very nice,  
little girl.

Poppy sits still for a few seconds and then her eyes widen, she  
slides down slowly under her bed covers.

POPPY

Who - who's there?

There is a few seconds of silence.

ST. BUNNYCRISP O.S.  
(Softly)  
Your conscience!

St. Bunnychrisp begins to chuckle but ends up choking and sputtering. Poppy screams, bounds out of bed, leaps over St. Bunnychrisp and runs, still screaming, from the room.

INT. SAME - A LITTLE LATER, NIGHT

John opens the door and pulls a hiccupping Poppy, by the hand, into the room.

JOHN  
This is ridiculous.

John gives the room a quick cursory examination.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
There, nothing! Now get back into bed and no more of this nonsense!

POPPY  
There WAS a voice!

JOHN  
Really? So what did it say?

POPPY  
Nothing.

JOHN  
So if it said nothing then how did you hear it?

POPPY  
Ummm, we-ell.  
(Pause, then in a rush)  
It said I wasn't a nice girl and that it was my conscience speaking.

John, not knowing whether to laugh or be exasperated, picks St. Bunnychrisp up and steers Poppy over to the bed.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
Don't laugh! It's not funny!

Poppy yanks St. Bunnychrisp out of John's hands.

Poppy opens the cupboard door and throws St. Bunnychrisp into the bottom and slams the door shut.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, it wasn't my conscience!

JOHN  
How do you know?

Poppy gets into bed and John folds his arms.

POPPY  
Because.  
(Thinking about it)  
My conscience sounds like me. And,  
the voice was all gruff and scary.

John tries to mentally navigate his way around the situation.

JOHN  
Poppy, I know today was tough at  
the Eisteddfod, and you had your  
presents and party go up in smoke.

Poppy looks up at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
But I can't do this right now. I've  
got a tough case in the morning  
helping people fight real monsters.

POPPY  
But I thought you said monsters  
weren't real.

JOHN  
Come on Poppy. You know I meant  
figuratively speaking.

Poppy looks down and picks at the bed cover with her fingers,  
her bottom lip beginning to tremble. She hiccups.

John sighs and rubs his head

JOHN (CONT'D)  
We all need to get some sleep, so  
please, no more drama.

John leaves the room. Poppy hiccups.

INT. SAME - A LITTLE LATER, NIGHT

Poppy is lying with her eyes closed, she hiccups. A largeshadow  
crosses the silhouettes of the rotating merry-go-round animals.

A tendril of smoke snakes across Poppy's face. Her nostrils twitch. She opens her eyes and sniffs the air. Smellingsmoke, she rises up onto her elbow concerned, she hiccups.

A large, blurry gray shape emerges from the shadows and presents itself in the beam of light from the window.

It solidifies into the form of St. Bunnycrisp and he is now two meters tall, living and breathing.

He looms closer and closer and stops a metre from her face; smoke seeping from his mouth.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
You make one little squeak...

St. Bunnycrisp pauses and extends his left paw. Poking out of his fist is Pixel.

Poppy sucks her breath in, hiccups cured.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
And I'll squeeze the living breath  
out of your precious little Pixel.  
Understand?  
(Pause)  
Uyaqonda?

Poppy gives a tiny nod.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Good. Now breathe. I can't have you  
dying on me... just yet!

Poppy gasps.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Gooooood, now tomorrow morning you  
gon' to say sorreee to your  
mommeee.  
(Miming locking his lips)  
Or the Pixel  
(Opening his fingers then  
gripping his paw closed)  
'FOOP'.

St. Bunnycrisp leans in closer to Poppy.

Poppy drags her eyes away from his to look at Pixel. Pixel's whiskers wave frantically and her nose twitches.

Poppy looks back up into St. Bunnycrisp's eyes, she cringes back into her pillow.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
U-ya-qon-da?

She nods vigorously.

St Bunnycrisp pulls back into the shadows until all Poppy can see is the glow of the night-light reflected in his eyes. A puff of smoke swirls out of the darkness.

She tries to wave it away but is enveloped by it. She coughs and then falls back asleep on her pillow.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - OUTSIDE POPPY'S HOME CLASSROOM - DAY- DAY

Poppy attends an elite school which is housed in stately early Twentieth Century stone buildings.

Poppy and her CLASSMATES (including Fatima and Moira) are lining up outside the classroom waiting for the teacher.

Some of the children whisper to one another, then sneak glances at Poppy.

The school PREFECTS walk down the corridor inspecting the students.

The children all fall silent as they see Jessica, Kimera and Zinzi approaching.

All three girls have a great air of importance and purpose. Their BLAZERS are adorned with badges, the trim is different to the rest of the school children showing their status. They wear striped girdles tied around their waist.

JESSICA  
Something smells. I can smell  
something... can't you?

Jessica walks down the line sniffing the air and slowly hones in on Poppy.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Oh, it's you!  
(Putting finger tip to her  
cheek and miming deep  
thought.)  
Have you been using oh de TOILETTE?

Fatima reaches for Poppy's hand.

Jessica snaps her attention to Fatima.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Is there a problem, Fati?

Fatima looks at Poppy and then back at Jessica. Jessica shifts her pose and looks at her enquiringly.

Fatima withdraws her hand and drops her head and shakes it.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
I didn't think so.

MOIRA  
Her name's not Fati its Fatima and  
you never even said sorry for  
burning up all of Poppy's presents.

While Moira has been talking, Jessica slowly and deliberately turns her attention from Fatima to Moira.

Jessica puts on a calm, kind and sincere face.

Jessica slowly lifts a little BOOK from the top pocket of her blazer. It is emblazoned with the School's crest and has "DETENTION REGISTER" printed below the crest. On the lapel of her blazer is a BADGE with "HEADGIRL" inscribed upon it.

JESSICA  
I'm sorry what is your name again?  
I just never seem to be able to  
remember it. Myrna, Myrtle, Mona?

Jessica stretches her hand out palm up to Kimera.

Kimera withdraws a PEN from her blazer pocket. Her badge states that she is a "PREFECT" and "HOUSE CAPTAIN". Kimera deposits the pen in Jessica's palm.

MOIRA  
Moira.

JESSICA  
Mwoiwa? Honestly the names hippy  
parents give their children these  
days.  
(Writing in the detention  
book)  
Okay so that will be detention for  
speaking in line.

MOIRA  
But you...

JESSICA  
(Interjecting)  
Oh, sorry, another detention for  
cheeking a prefect. Anything more  
to say?

Moira shakes her head with a furious scowl.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
I didn't think so, and please do  
something with that hair by  
tomorrow. Or there will one  
detention for every day you don't  
have it neat and tidy and not this  
terrible bird's nest. Honestly!

Jessica tears the top duplicate slip out of the book and hands  
it over to Zinzi.

Zinzi slides the slip into her blazer pocket. Her badge states  
"PREFECT" and her badges include "Debating", "Hockey Captain"  
and "Netball Captain".

Jessica surveys the other children. One by one they all lower  
their heads in submission.

A bell rings and Jessica strides to the front of the line and  
opens the classroom door.

The scholars file past her into the classroom. Jessica sniffs  
and wrinkles her nose as Moira and Fatima walk past and then  
holds her nose when Poppy walks past her.

Some of the children titter and Jessica smirks.

EXT / INT. GRACE'S CAR - DAY

Grace is driving Poppy home after school. Poppy is sitting in  
the back seat of the SUV and staring out the window. Grace is  
watching her in the rear-view mirror.

GRACE  
So you're still not talking to me?

Poppy tightens her mouth.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Well fine then, I don't want to  
hear from you till you're your  
sweet self again.

Grace catches sight of Poppy giving her a glare in the rear-  
view mirror.



GRACE (CONT'D)  
Don't give me that look.

POPPY  
I'll just talk to Pixel then!

GRACE  
Don't forget, St. Bunnychrisp too...

Poppy's head snaps forward and her eyes meet her mom's in the mirror.

POPPY  
PIXEL!

GRACE  
What?

POPPY  
No, you don't understand... Mom, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

GRACE  
Oh good grief!

POPPY  
Did you or did you not put that rabbit in my backpack?

GRACE  
Poppy, I already...

POPPY  
Yes or no?

GRACE  
I told you... NO!

POPPY  
(Thinking out loud to herself)  
It's worse than I thought.  
(Addressing her mom)  
That THING... that rabbit has to go.  
If I say I'm sorry will you get rid of it?

GRACE  
No. You don't get to dictate the terms of your apologies here. If you are sorry then you are sorry, end of story.

POPPY  
FINE! I'm sorry!

GRACE  
Okay, I'll take that while the  
going's good. But don't think...

POPPY  
(Interjecting)  
That rabbit has to go. You have to  
destroy it.  
(with dramatic resolution)  
You must burn him.

GRACE  
Don't be ridiculous - we can put it  
in with the donations for the  
Children's Home charity drive.

Grace gives Poppy a very concerned look in the rear-view  
mirror.

POPPY  
(To herself)  
Then I'll just have to burn him  
myself.

INT. THE SOBUKWE GARAGE - DAY

Poppy opens the lid of a KETTLE BARBECUE DRUM.

Poppy places St. Bunnychrisp on the grill.

She looks around for fire making material. The  
charcoal bag is empty.

The wood bin only has a few twigs and pine cones in it.

Poppy returns to the kettle barbecue drum, and looks at St.  
Bunnychrisp lying on the grill. She closes the lid.

Poppy is walking out the garage, she pauses, takes a few steps  
back and looks up to the tool shelf.

Poppy retrieves a HAMMER and some LONG NAILS from a high  
shelf.

INT - POPPY'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Poppy has her CD PLAYER on and has cranked up the volume.  
Pixel's house is on the floor and far away from the table.

Poppy is hammering nails into the wooden window frame on the beat of the music.

INT. THE SOBUKWE KITCHEN - EVENING CONTINUOUS

Grace and John are preparing the supper together in the kitchen. Poppy's pounding music beats into the kitchen from above.

Grace looks up at the ceiling and shakes her head.

JOHN

TEN! Not even a teenager yet.  
(In mock piety and  
seriousness.)  
God grant us strength for this time  
that is upon us.

GRACE

I'm going up there to deal with  
this.

Grace starts to set off when the pounding music stops.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Poppy is lying in bed with her bedside lamp on. She is reading ARTEMIS FOWL and has Pixel cuddled between her head and pillow.

She stops reading, looks around the room and smiles.

Poppy picks Pixel up and kisses her, then puts her back in the crook of her shoulder.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - LATER, NIGHT

Pixel's nose is poked through the bars of the window in her house, she sniffs at the air.

Poppy is fast asleep. A noise at the window wakes Poppy.

She sits up in alarm and looks at the window.

Peering in from outside is the face of St. Bunnycrisp.

Poppy leaps from her bed screaming, she races out her bedroom.

INT. GRACE AND JOHN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy wakes up in the middle of her parent's king sized sleigh-bed. She sits up and looks around - the room is empty; she checks the CLOCK (sitting next to a framed WEDDING PHOTO of her parents), it is 7.30am.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY CONTINUOUS

Poppy pushes her bedroom door open slowly.

She stays in the passageway while she surveys the room cautiously through the doorway.

The window is still hammered closed - all appears quiet. Poppy sees Pixel's snout sniffing for her out a window.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy launches herself into the room.

In a mad dash she grabs her uniform and backpack.

In a final frenzied hurry Poppy snatches Pixel from her house.

EXT. THE SOBUKWE HOME - DAY

Grace is in the driver's seat of her SUV. Poppy is standing frozen next to the car.

The garage door is up and Poppy can see the Kettle Drum - the lid has fallen to the side and the grill is empty.

GRACE  
Poppy, get in!

POPPY  
But I did see him...

Poppy looks up at the windows of the second story of the house.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
At my bedroom window.

Grace gets out the car and opens the back passenger door of the car.

GRACE

You are ten years old now and  
running around screaming in the  
night. Going on about talking  
rabbits. It's time to grow up  
Poppy.

Grace gets back into the driver's seat and starts the engine.  
Grace hits the remote button to close the garage door.

Poppy bends to her side trying to look inside the garage as the  
door slowly lowers to the ground.

Grace has to shout to be heard above the noise of the garage  
door and the car engine.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Not one more word about that stupid  
rabbit. Not one more word! GET IT?

Poppy straightens, blinks and nods her head.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Now get in. I'm late for work  
where, as you know, I have to deal  
with children who actually have  
REAL monsters in their lives!

Poppy climbs into the car and closes the door.

Grace steers the car into the road, pulling away from the curb  
aggressively.

Two rabbit ears are visible through the back window of the SUV.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

The CLOCK on the wall shows that the time is 8.15 AM. Poppy is  
late for school. The corridors are deserted as all the children  
are already in class.

Poppy hurries up the corridor.

Looking up Poppy sees Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera striding down  
the corridor towards her. They are speaking to one another in  
low voices.

Poppy freezes, then realizes it appears as though they have not  
yet seen her.

Poppy looks around and sees a DOOR; she pulls it open and dives into the dark interior of a janitor's BROOM CLOSET.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, BROOM CLOSET - DAY CONTINUOUS

Poppy grabs onto a broom as it is about to fall over and steadies it.

She tries to still her breathing, keeping as quiet as possible. She then takes a few sniffs at the air.

Looking down at her feet she sees a few wisps of smoke, she looks up in alarm.

Behind her shoulder a form with two long ears begins to emerge from the gloom.

Poppy is about to scream when a white furry paw clamps over her mouth.

The door flies open and Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera see Poppy, eyes wide, hand over her own mouth, and broomstick in hand.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Poppy steps out the closet with as much dignity as she can muster, holding her head high.

Jessica pulls the black book from her pocket.

Right hand out to Kimera.

Pen is placed in palm.

Top duplicate page is torn out the book.

Page is slipped into Zinzi's pocket.

JESSICA

Now you'll get to join Mwoiwa in  
detention this afternoon.

Poppy starts to protest then sags defeated.

Jessica gestures for Poppy to get a move on.

Jessica watches Poppy walk down the corridor when she notices a movement in Poppy's backpack.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Stop right there Poppy Sobukwe!

Poppy freezes.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
What is in your backpack?

Poppy turns around and give a nervous 'I don't know' gesture.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
(To Kimera)  
Go and check it out.

Kimera walks up to Poppy and gestures for the bag. Poppy reluctantly hands it over.

Kimera opens it and looks inside.

KIMERA  
(Shrieking and dropping  
the bag on the floor)  
It's a rat!

Poppy scoops her bag up and clutches it to her chest protectively.

Jessica storms over and tries to grab the bag away but Poppy holds onto it and they do a tug of war. Jessica wins.

Jessica opens the bag and lifts the cage out triumphantly, but it is empty and the door is open.

Poppy gasps.

Jessica eyes narrow, she holds the bag out to Poppy.

JESSICA  
Get it out and put it back in the  
cage.

Poppy reaches gently into the bag and scoops out Pixel.

POPPY  
It's not a rat; it's Pixel.

JESSICA  
Do I care? What do you think you're  
in - pre-primary? Is this bring  
your pet to school day? I don't  
think so. That means detention  
tomorrow, as well.

Jessica holds the cage out and Poppy reluctantly places Pixel back in.

Jessica walks off triumphant with Pixel in her cage staring back at Poppy.

Zinzi and Kimera follow on.

Jessica pauses and turns back to Poppy.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
And yes that does mean you will be  
missing choir practise tomorrow.

Jessica deposits the cage into Kimera's hands. Kimera with a look of horror reluctantly take the cage and holds it far away from her body.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Keep this up and what with Sunday's  
no show.  
(Jessica gives a big  
helpless shrug)  
Wouldn't it be a pity if you got  
dropped from choir? Just saying.

Jessica swivels away leaving Poppy devastated.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - DAY

Poppy comes rushing out the front entrance of the school, backpack on her back and Pixel in the cage in her hand.

Grace is waiting in the SUV - there is no other car in the parking lot.

Poppy runs over to the vehicle and opens the door.

Grace is not impressed, she does not greet Poppy as she gets in.

Poppy clicks her seat belt in and looks at her mom cautiously.

Grace stares ahead and grips the steering wheel, fighting herself.

GRACE  
(Starting quietly)  
I am very disappointed. Detention!  
And you didn't think to sms me?  
(Pausing to regain  
control)  
You do realize that this spoils  
your perfect record?



Poppy looks out the window.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
That means no Deportment Girdle.

POPPY  
(Quietly)  
I'm sorry mom.

GRACE  
(Turning to face Poppy,  
her anger dissipated)  
Why did you take Pixel to school?  
You know you're not allowed to do  
that? Hmmm?

POPPY  
I just wanted her to be safe.

GRACE  
From what?

Poppy bites her lip and looks out the car window.

Grace starts the ignition and begins to reverse the car.

B.G. Jessica walks out of the school front entrance carrying  
St. Bunnycrisp. Jessica waves to Grace.

Grace stops the car.

Poppy looks up to see what is happening, she sees Jessica, she  
opens her mouth to say something and freezes with her mouth  
open.

Jessica arrives at Grace's open window.

JESSICA  
Hi Aunty Grace.

Jessica hands St. Bunnycrisp through the window to Grace.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
The cleaner found this in her store-  
room... so strange, I wonder what it  
was doing there?

Grace looks over her shoulder at Poppy.

Poppy morphs her mouth into a strange toothy grimace Grace  
hands the rabbit over to Poppy.

Poppy looks at St. Bunnycrisp with alarm.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy throws her backpack down on the floor, she pulls St. Bunnychrisp out from the bag by his ears and throws him into her cupboard.

Poppy slams the door shut and locks the door with the key.

Poppy glares at the closed door and breathes heavily.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Poppy is lying in her bed reading by the light of the night-light. The light flickers and then dims to darkness.

She shuts her book.

The key in the cupboard door turns in the lock and with a click the door pops open a fraction.

In a flash Poppy leaps from her bed and grabs Pixel out of the Barbie house. She holds her close to her chest in both hands and spins around to face the cupboard.

St. Bunnychrisp is immediately in front of her.

Poppy opens her mouth to scream but St. Bunnychrisp leans in quickly towards her and with a finger to his lips shushes her.

She swallows the scream.

POPPY  
(Tearfully and in a  
whisper)  
What are you?

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
I'm your worst nightmare...

St. Bunnychrisp, still leaning forward, tilts his head to one side, narrows his eyes and looks at Poppy unblinkingly. Hethen growls and barks.

Poppy clutches Pixel under her chin, closes her eyes and turns her shoulder to him, cowering. She begins to whimper.

St. Bunnychrisp straightens up and gives a sigh of exasperation.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
You are scared of me?

Poppy gives a little nod.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
I don't know, maybe I'm just  
getting too old for this. But  
scaring you, when you are already  
scared? Where's the challenge?  
Where is the fun?

POPPY  
(Opening one eye to look  
at him)  
That's mean!

They survey each other eye to eye.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
(Straightening up)  
When it's your job, it's your job.  
Well, at least this is the last  
one. Then off to retirement!  
(Clapping his paws  
together and rubbing them  
with satisfaction)  
Now let's get back to business.

Poppy straightens up and puts on a brave face.

POPPY  
I think you should leave.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
In a moment.  
(Beat)  
Now I am going to give you one more  
BOO!

Poppy flinches.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Then you are going to promise me to  
be a good little girl, and not to  
bully any more children.

Poppy cocks her head and looks at St. Bunnychrisp, confusion  
written all over her face.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
And then you are going to promise  
me to listen to your Mama and your  
Tata.

Poppy nods her head slowly but still confused.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
And not to pull the wings off  
anymore butterflies.

Poppy gasps in horror.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
And not to poke the little moleys  
with a stick.

POPPY  
I would NEVER!

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Never promise? Or never ever poke  
the moley?

POPPY  
Never hurt anyone!

A scowling Poppy stomps her foot.

St. Bunnychrisp does an assessment of the situation.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
(Scratching his head)  
I'm getting a very, very bad  
feeling here...

Poppy gives him a "you're getting a bad feeling - what about  
me?" look.

St. Bunnychrisp pulls at his ear, then begins to pace up and  
down.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Uh-uh! No no no no no. Never ever!  
This cannot be.

Poppy nods with a "you're telling me?" amazement.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
What, to do? What to do, what to  
do, what to do? Think Pooka. THINK!

POPPY  
Pooka?

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
(Waving Poppy's gnat of a  
comment away)  
Maybe there was what you people  
call a bureaucratic bungle and I  
got misassigned.

POPPY

A what?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Eish! Now I have said too much.  
Uuuh... I think I am just going to  
slip out of the window, if you  
don't mind.

POPPY

(Sarcastically)

Please do. But I nailed it shut to  
keep you out!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Ah, yes! Clever you. Well, stand  
back.

Poppy steps back.

St. Bunnycrisp steps up on to the desk.

St. Bunnycrisp leans forward concentrating on the window.

The nails being to vibrate and slowly start pushing out of the  
wood, until each one is hovering like a little missile in the  
air.

He straightens up and the nails fall to the desk.

He opens the window and climbs over Pixel's house and out onto  
the ledge.

Poppy watches him open-mouthed.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)

(Turning back to Poppy)

Now remember your promise and be a  
good girl.

Poppy nods quickly.

St. Bunnycrisp turns around and hops off the ledge.

Poppy runs forward and looks out the window but he is gone. The  
light fizzes and return to normal.

Poppy slowly opens her hands. Pixel has fallen asleep on her  
back with her tail curled up and over her head.

Poppy deposits Pixel gently back into her home. Poppy  
closes the window.

POPPY

Shew!

Poppy eases herself back into bed and with a contented sigh re-opens her book.

Without any visible aiding the window slides back open and the soft toy version of St. Bunnychrisp comes flying through the window and bounces on the table.

Poppy bolts upright on her bed.

The lights dim, there is a loud popping noise as St. Bunnychrisp bounces off the table and mid-air transforms into his large size before her eyes and then the lights blow out.

St. Bunnychrisp bristling, fizzing and glowing light green, brushes himself off.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Ah the boomerang *mayibuye* effect.  
Well it seems I am meant to be here  
after all.

POPPY

But why?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Now that is a good question!

POPPY

I don't understand - why are you  
doing this to me? Up until you, my  
worst nightmare was Jessica...

ST. BUNNYCRISP

(Interjecting)

Jessica! Now why did I not think of  
that?

POPPY

Of what?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Jessica!

GRACE (O.S.)

Poppy... don't panic I'm going to  
check the fuse.

POPPY

My Mom! Fix the lights. QUICK!

St. Bunnychrisp goes over to a plug socket and is about to stick his finger in, Poppy begins to protest but then stops and gives him a "go for it look".

St. Bunnychrisp puts his finger in the socket.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Now kids, do not try this at home.

His fur bristles upright and glows orange, there is a fizzing sound, then humming and the lights come back on.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Satisfied?

POPPY  
Hmph!

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
What, you would have liked me to be fried?

GRACE (O.S.)  
Oh, Escom power surge. I'm coming up to say good night.

POPPY  
(To St. Bunnychrisp)  
Quick, you've got to hide!

St. Bunnychrisp dives into the cupboard and sets it rocking as Grace enters the room.

Grace observes Poppy standing up on her bed.

GRACE  
Oh honey, did the blackout frighten you?

Poppy nods, then gets back under the covers.

Grace sits down next to her and smooths Poppy's hair back.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Poppy it's been a bad, bad week hasn't it? I don't want us to fight...

Grace encourages Poppy to shake her head along with her.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Do you?

Poppy nods reluctantly.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 I just want my sweet Poppy back.  
 (Embracing Poppy)  
 So how about we celebrate your  
 birthday again this Saturday?

POPPY  
 With the clowns and their dogs  
 and...

GRACE  
 Uh-uh no, just you, me and Dad, and  
 Fima and Moi, and their presents,  
 and maybe something a little extra  
 from us... What do you think? Give  
 turning ten another go at being  
 happy?

Poppy nods happily.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 (With a relieved smile)  
 Now is there anything you want to  
 talk about?

Poppy sneaks a glance at the cupboard, shuts her lips tightly  
 and shakes her head.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
 I know, I can give Jessica's mom a  
 call in the morning and ask if  
 Jessica can keep a special eye on  
 you...

POPPY  
 (Shaking her head  
 frantically)  
 NO! It's fine... please don't call  
 Jessica and and,  
 (Looking back at the  
 cupboard)  
 I'm sorry I've been so crazy and  
 I'll be good, I promise.

GRACE  
 I know you will.

Grace goes to the door, blows her a kiss and exits.

Poppy waits with bated breath, then bounds out of bed and storms  
 over to the cupboard and flings the door open.

St. Bunnychrisp is standing cramped over amongst Poppy's dresses  
 with a CROWN that has slipped onto his ear.



She pulls him out the cupboard.

St. Bunnychrisp takes the crown off his ear and after a moment's hesitation puts it on Poppy's head.

POPPY

Did you hear? I made my promise.

St. Bunnychrisp nods seriously.

POPPY (CONT'D)

So now can you go?

Poppy takes the crown off and puts it on the desk.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Why didn't you tell her?

POPPY

About you? She thinks I'm crazy. So no, not again.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

No, about the mean one, Jessica.

POPPY

(Pouring out in indignant relief)

Well, Jessica used to be my friend. That was till she turned ten and said I was too much of a baby to be her friend. That's when she started being mean. And if I tell my mom that Jessica has been mean,

(Putting on a sing-song placating voice)

then she'll tell me to remember that Jessica is going through a difficult time

(snapping back to her annoyed self)

SO - there's no point, she'll just take her side.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

So this Jessica... she is a bully?

POPPY

(Thinking about it)

YES! Yes she is. But all the grown-ups think she's so-o nice!

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
All the teachers and all the  
parents?

POPPY  
She was voted head girl.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Well, I think my mission is clear.  
It just got a bit off the track.  
Sorry for the boo and all.

Poppy is not sure if that is good enough for all he has put her  
through.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
You have got to give me back to  
this Jessica.

POPPY  
What? Why?

St. Bunnychrisp begins to walk in a circle as he works things  
out for himself.

ST BUNNYCRISP  
(More to himself.)  
Mmm. Because maybe I was meant to  
be with her all along.  
(A new thought causes him  
to pause)  
Ah! But maybe it was that sharp-  
shooter boy?

POPPY  
What are you talking about?

St. Bunnychrisp studies Poppy then gives a big shrug.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Top secret! Tomorrow you have got  
to hand me over to Jessica, and she  
has got to accept me, like a gift.

POPPY  
HOW? If I hand you back to her  
she's just going to laugh! She  
won't take you back.

ST BUNNYCRISP  
Well that is where we are going to  
have to be really clever and trick  
her! What do you say - you think  
you can be tricky?

Poppy tries to give her best wily smile and nods.

ST BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
*Laduma!* Now let us both get some  
 sleep.

St. Bunnycrisp opens the cupboard, steps inside and closes the door behind him.

Poppy waits a few seconds then goes over to the cupboard and slowly eases the door open.

Lying on the floor of the cupboard is the toy version of St. Bunnycrisp.

Poppy leans in a bit closer to examine him, then closes the door quietly.

ACT TWO

INT. SOBUKWE KITCHEN - DAY

Poppy, Grace and John are seated at the breakfast table eating their BOWLS of PORRIDGE. Poppy is neatly dressed in her uniform. The table is covered in CASE FILES that John is working through.

POPPY  
 Papa?

John continues to read through his case notes.

JOHN  
 Mmm?

POPPY  
 Remember the Xhosa *Nstomis* you used  
 to tell me?

This has John's attention, he sits up and focuses on Poppy and nods.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 There was a ra...

Poppy pauses to see if her parents picked up on the word, they haven't.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 Rrr...Remember the *vundla*?

JOHN  
Ja, the trickster.

POPPY  
Was he good or bad?

JOHN  
Mmm, the trickster is both.  
Sometimes he's there to cause  
trouble, sometimes he's there to  
help. Especially if there is  
something you don't want to see,  
about yourself, then he will trick  
you into seeing it.

Poppy ponders this answer while eating her porridge.

John scoops a spoon of porridge into his mouth and looks over at Grace.

Grace is watching Poppy with a smile on her face.

John catches her eye and he gives a thumbs-up and winks at her.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

St. Bunnycrisp is watching Pixel through a window of her house.

Poppy enters the room and St. Bunnycrisp gestures for Poppy to join him.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Time for action; *shukumisa*!

He straightens up and puts his head to one side and cups a paw to his ear; he then bangs the opposite temple.

Satisfied he closes his paw and stretches it out to Poppy - still closed.

Hesitantly Poppy holds out her hand. St.

Bunnycrisp opens his hand.

Poppy feels something move and quickly closes her hand.

St. Bunnycrisp then gestures for her to hold her hand to her ear.

She does so. She gives a little start and shakes her head.

Poppy puts her finger in her ear and wiggles it around.

POPPY  
What was that?

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
That's just a little bug. Let it  
settle in.

Poppy's instinct is now to get it out of her ear, she starts to shake her head.

POPPY  
Eew, what for?

St. Bunnychrisp takes hold of her face in his paws to stop her.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
So that we can communicate today  
without the rest of the world  
knowing.

Poppy looks up at St. Bunnychrisp through squashed cheeks.

POPPY  
Wha-at?

St. Bunnychrisp lets go of her head. He leans in and looks Poppy in the eyes.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
(Lips remaining closed)  
Has it settled in yet?

POPPY  
(Gasps)  
I heard you... here... right in my  
ear. How did you do that?

St. Bunnychrisp wags his finger, then gestures to his lips and mimes the action of turning a key.

St. Bunnychrisp backs away till he is half-way across the room.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Try again - in your head.

POPPY (V.O.)  
But how?  
(Gasps out loud. Then with  
closed lips.)  
I get it, we just have to think it!

St. Bunnycrisp gives her a thumbs-up and winks at Poppy.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL PASSAGEWAY, OUTSIDE POPPY'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Poppy turns the corner to her home classroom and sees her classmates filing into the classroom.

Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera have held Moira back and have her surrounded.

Poppy freezes then leaps back behind the corner. She slowly peeps around to watch what is happening.

Moira has her hair scraped into two uneven little pigtails on either side of her head - they are also not symmetrically placed. As some of her hair is escaping from the hair bands she has a series of clips all over her head trying to keep it in place - the effect is untidy and pitiable, this is something she has obviously tried to do on her own.

Jessica shakes her head in mock-disbelief. She turns to make a comment about Moira's hair to Zinzi and Kimera, she gesticulates at Moira's hair. Zinzi and Kimera collapse into laughter. Moira hangs her head. Jessica writes out a detention slip for her.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Poppy is sitting with Moira and Fatima on the grass, under the shade of some trees as they eat from their lunch-boxes. Poppy has her backpack next to her, St. Bunnycrisp's ears are sticking out of the backpack.

In the background children are playing various games or sitting on the lawn or at the picnic benches and tables eating their lunch. A group of Grade 7 girls holds the prime position with Jessica holding court.

Fatima hands a pastry to Moira and to Poppy.

Poppy takes hers from Fatima.

POPPY

Thanks.

Poppy starts to nibble round the edges as she fixes her stare on Jessica, totally distracted from what her friends are talking about.

MOIRA

Ooh your mom's sweet meats - thanks  
Fima, they're the best.

Moira tucks into her pastry.

B.G. A Grade 7 girl (CLARISSA) gets up from the group and walks back towards the school building.

Jessica watches her leave then gestures for the other Grade 7 girls to gather around.

MOIRA (CONT'D)

I wonder why they call them sweet  
MEAT?

B.G. The Grade 7 girls huddle together while Jessica tells them a big secret. There are gestures of shock - "no way!" disgust - "ew!" and some girls cover their mouths in disbelief.

FATIMA

Hmm, I've never thought about that.

MOIRA

Like the Christmas mince pies your  
mom makes Pops - there's no mince,  
just mushed up raisons, like a pie  
full of squished flies.

Fatima groans in disgust and laughs.

FATIMA

Did you hear that Pops?

Poppy does not reply. Fatima looks at Poppy then follows her eye-line.

Moira is snorting with laughter, her mouth full. She sees Fatima's face become serious and so she too looks to see what her friends are watching.

Clarissa comes back out the building and heads back to her group.

Kimera gestures to Jessica. Jessica rises up and as one the group walks away from Clarissa, shunning her. Not one girl turns to look at her. Clarissa is left confused and looks around trying to fish an answer out the air.

MOIRA

Jessica is so mean!

POPPY

The worst is I can never think of  
anything to say back to her. Only  
just before I go to sleep, I think,  
DING -

(MORE)

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 (gesturing with finger in  
 the air)  
 - light-bulb! But it's too late  
 then.

FATIMA  
 Well at least you think of  
 something. I get so scared of her  
 that I can't even be mean to her in  
 my head.

MOIRA  
 (Laughing)  
 I just say the first thing that  
 comes into my head, you know, like  
 a brain fart!

Poppy covers her mouth and begins to snort with laughter.

Fatima looks at Moira, then at Poppy, then they all laugh  
 together.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, DETENTION CLASSROOM - DAY

A weary TEACHER (DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1) is over-seeing the  
 group of SCHOOL CHILDREN, Poppy and Moira included, who have  
 been issued with Detention.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1  
 Settle in your seats, eyes front,  
 and sit upright, hands palm-down  
 under your thighs. Time starts when  
 you are all sitting still.

Poppy sighs and looks out the window.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1 (CONT'D)  
 Eyes front Miss Sobukwe - this is  
 Detention, not an opportunity for  
 daydreaming.

Poppy bites her lip and looks at the teacher.

The class quickly settles into the dictated position.

Poppy looks over at Moira who gives her a small shrug and a  
 little tight-lipped smile.

Poppy looks to the front of the class, slumps in her seat,  
 heaves a sigh and places her hands under her thighs.

Poppy looks up at the clock on the wall - it is 2 o'clock.



POPPY (V.O.)  
A whole hour to go. I can't believe  
I'm in Detention, AGAIN! It's sooo  
boring.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
It does not have to be.

Poppy sits bolt upright, she suppresses a smile.

POPPY (V.O.)  
Bunny! I'd forgotten about you!

Trying not to squirm in her seat she sits still while her eyes  
roam around seeing if anyone is noticing anything.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Would you like to have an  
adventure?

POPPY (V.O.)  
What do you mean? I'm in detention.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Your body is, but your mind is  
free.

The teacher, wearily marking papers, looks up and casts a  
glance around the room.

Poppy freezes.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Are you ready?

POPPY (V.O.)  
I, I don't know.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Okay, here we go...

CUT TO:

EXT. FANTASY LAND - DAY

Poppy finds herself standing in an ancient primal forest  
filled with giant trees, ferns, fantastical flowers and hanging  
swathes of 'old man's beard'.

Birdcalls, whistles, whirring and whoops filter through the  
air.

A soft running thudding becomes louder. Poppy looks around trying to locate the source of the sound.

A white paw pushes between Strelitzia leaves. St. Bunnycrisp steps out from the bushes and with a twirling flourish with his right paw, bows deeply to her.

Poppy runs to him and embraces him around his middle.

St. Bunnycrisp is almost knocked off his large feet, not by the force of the hug, but that he has never had a child hug him before. His hands remain levitating in the air.

Poppy steps back and looks around.

POPPY

What is this place? Is this where  
you come from?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

You could say so.

POPPY

Can I explore?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

That is why we are here. Just go  
quietly and carefully. Step  
lightly.

POPPY

Why?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Well aside from the fact that you  
should not step on that.

Poppy looks down and pulls her left foot up just as a Venus fly-trap type plant snaps shut.

POPPY

Oh!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Or squash that.

Poppy lifts her right foot up.

In her footprint is a torn leaf. The leaf begins to move and from under it out marches an ant.

POPPY  
(Sucking air in through  
her gritted teeth)  
I'm sorry, so sorry.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Lucky for him he is very strong. He  
can lift something five thousand  
times bigger than him.

Poppy looks carefully at where she places her feet.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
(in a mumble)  
But... mostly because I'm not  
supposed to be here. And especially  
not with you.

He points to a sign, it states: "NO HUMAN CHILDREN ALLOWED!"

POPPY  
Ooh, we're breaking the rules!  
You're making me break the rules. I  
thought you were supposed to teach  
me to be good.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Well, maybe we can bend the rules.  
Like, what if you were not JUST a  
human child?

Poppy is becoming familiar with feeling confused when St.  
Bunnycrisp makes a proclamation.

POPPY  
Okay, so what does THAT mean?

St. Bunnycrisp pauses for thought. He then wiggles his ears. He  
points his finger at Poppy and wags it once.

A strange sensation fizzles in her ears. Poppy puts her hands up  
to feel her ears. There is a little "POP" noise and Poppy's ears  
transform into rabbit ears which shoot up through her hair.  
Poppy turns her head side to side trying to see her ears.

Her ears twitch and like little satellite-dishes receiving  
information, they turn in different directions.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
Ooh, its like I've got SUPER POWER.  
I can hear E-V-E-RYTHING!

Poppy concentrates on the sounds she is hearing, she moves in the direction her ears turn. She follows a sound downwards to a branch.

Inching along a stem is a multi-striped caterpillar, munching its way around the edge of a leaf.

Poppy looks up in awe at St. Bunnycrisp.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - DETENTION CLASSROOM - DAY

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1  
Miss Sobukwe? Miss Sobukwe! POPPY  
SOBUKWE!

Poppy snaps out of Fantasy Land to find the Detention Teacher standing in front of her with her arms crossed.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1 (CONT'D)  
Oh good, back in the room are we?

Poppy looks up at the clock on the wall - an hour has gone by.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1 (CONT'D)  
Got something blocking our ears?

Poppy shakes her head quickly.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1 (CONT'D)  
I've never seen the like! Body here  
but no one at home. Okay Miss  
Daydreamer, detentions over, you  
can hop it.

Poppy looks around and sees the other children are filing out of the room.

Poppy grabs her backpack and sets off at a run.

DETENTION TEACHER NO. 1 (CONT'D)  
Uh, uh, uh, no running in the  
classroom.

Poppy slows down, suppresses a smile but can barely contain her excitement.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY CONTINUOUS

Poppy is walking down the corridor with a happy smile on her face.

A flock of choir girls is walking towards her - Jessica at the leading edge.

JESSICA  
(Snarky)  
Sorry you missed choir practise  
Poppy?

Like a hot knife through butter, Poppy walks through the group, not paying any attention to Jessica.

The group parts and Jessica stops in her tracks in disbelief and turns to watch Poppy glide up the passage. Jessicanarrows her eyes in suspicion.

INT. SOBUKWE KITCHEN - NIGHT  
Poppy, Grace and John are all at the kitchen table finishing their supper.

Poppy is shovelling her food into her mouth as fast as she can; chewing, swallowing, gulping down mouthfuls with water.

JOHN  
Is there a race on that I don't  
know of?

Grace shakes her head in amazement.

GRACE  
What does the winner get?

JOHN  
To clean up.

Poppy shovels her last mouth of food in. Leaps from the table and gathers up the dishes.

John is still trying to get his last mouthful of food off the plate when Poppy snatches it away.

Poppy runs a sink of hot water which she pops the pots into.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
I was joking!

Grace indicates with a wave of her hand not to stop Poppy. Poppy rushes around the kitchen whisking things into place.

POPPY  
Done! Excuse me please. I'm going  
to bed.

Poppy breezes past her parents giving them a glancing kiss on the cheek.

GRACE

It's still early, don't you want to watch an episode of *Project Runway* with me?

POPPY

Uh... no. I can't. I still have some homework to finish.

GRACE

Okay then, well good night.

JOHN

Sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite.

Poppy pauses in the doorway with her back to her parents, she reaches up and touches her hand to her ear. A gleeful smile sneaks onto her lips.

INSIDE POPPY'S CUPBOARD - NIGHT

Poppy rips the cupboard door open and reaches in to grab the toy version of St. Bunnychrisp.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Poppy sits on her bed and places St. Bunnychrisp in front of her. She sits with a big expectant smile on her face, waiting. Nothing happens.

POPPY (V.O.)

(Looking around the room  
as she speaks in her  
head.)

Bunny? St. Bunnychrisp - where are you?

No answer. Poppy picks St. Bunnychrisp up and shakes him gently. She then lifts him up to her eye-level and looks him in the eyes.

FROM ST. BUNNYCRISP'S P.O.V.

Poppy's face gets closer and closer till she is eyeball to eyeball with him.

POPPY  
Hel-loo. Are you in there?

Poppy face is a picture of disappointment.

BACK IN POPPY'S ROOM

With a sigh Poppy puts the toy-version of St. Bunnycrisp back down on the bed. She gets up dejectedly and then slowly starts to take off her school uniform.

She stops and looks at St. Bunnycrisp and then places him facing the wall.

SAME, A LITTLE LATER

Poppy is in her pajamas. She takes her blazer off the chair and walks over to the cupboard (to hang it up inside).

As she gets to the cupboard the doors fly open and out bursts full-sized St. Bunnycrisp.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
BOO!

Poppy leaps back and gives a shriek of fear. St.

Bunnycrisp quickly covers her mouth.

They wait crunched down, Poppy's eyes looking left and right, St. Bunnycrisp's ears twitching - testing the silence.

No, the parents did not hear her.

St. Bunnycrisp lets go of Poppy and they both breathe a sign of relief.

Poppy looks back at her bed - the soft-toy version is not there - she punches St. Bunnycrisp on the arm.

A surprised St. Bunnycrisp rubs his arm.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
Ow.

POPPY  
You scared me!

St. Bunnycrisp begin to chuckle.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
It's not funny!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Yes, it was  
 (trying to stifle the  
 waves of laughter)  
 You were like...

St. Bunnychrisp with big eyes mimes Poppy hands in the air and leaping back.

Poppy stomps her foot and sticks out her lip and then she begins to break into laughter. She covers her mouth and her body shakes.

St. Bunnychrisp hunches over with suppressed laughter which sets his right foot thumping on the floor.

SAME, A FEW MINUTES LATER

Poppy and St Bunnychrisp are lying on the floor taking big gulps of breath between little gasps of laughter.

SAME, A FEW MINUTES LATER

Poppy and St. Bunnychrisp have regained their composure and are seated on the floor facing one another.

POPPY

So, can we go again, can we go now?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Okay, close your eyes.

Poppy closes her eyes. Nothing happens. Poppy starts to open one eye. Her nose twitches. She closes her eyes and wiggles her nose. She then rubs her nose.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP ON POPPY RUBBING HER NOSE.

EXT. FANTASY LAND - NIGHT

Poppy rubs her nose, it is a little rabbit's nose.

POPPY

Nothings...

She opens her eyes. She is back in the Fantasy Forest.



The forest is dark. She feels her nose again, then sniffs.  
Around her trails and swirls of colour form.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
What are those?

ST. BUNNYCRISP (O.S.)  
Those are scent trails.

Poppy follows her nose.

POPPY  
Ew! That one's a bit stinky!  
(Sniffing the air and  
catching another trail.)  
Oh, but this one's lovely.

Poppy runs, following the scent trail.

EXT. FANTASY LAND, FLOWER GLADE - NIGHT CONTINUOUS  
Within the trees there is a glade of flowers glowingluminescent  
white in the moonlight. Their big blossoms waft softly in the  
breeze sending out their silvery scent trails.

Poppy and St. Bunnychrisp enter the glade.

Poppy pushes her nose into a flower and inhales deeply, she  
pulls away from the flower and looks inside.

Inside is a white furry moth (like a Venezuelan poodle moth),  
Poppy sniffs gently.

POPPY  
And you too - you smell like...  
nutmeg!

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy sniffs the air and smiles, she opens her eyes. To  
her amazement she is back in her bed.

SAME A LITTLE LATER

Poppy is dressed in her school uniform. Her backpack is on  
the desk. She is carefully placing St. Bunnychrisp into the  
backpack

POPPY  
 (Speaking gently to the  
 soft-toy version of St.  
 Bunnychrisp)  
 So you just let me know if you  
 feeling squashed or anything.  
 (Tapping her head)  
 In here. Okay?

Poppy looks into the toy's eyes, nods to herself and gently pushes him into the backpack and closes the flap.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL HOME CLASSROOM - DAY

Poppy is in her home classroom with the rest of her classmates and her class teacher MISS BURNETT (a Miranda-like, lovable but ultimately socially awkward adult).

MISS BURNETT  
 Girls! Girls, if I may have your  
 attention please?

Miss Burnett waits for the class to settle.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
 AS you know, we've been collecting  
 toys for the Children's Shelter  
 that Poppy's mum runs.

Miss Burnett gives a smile and nod to Poppy. Poppy squirms in her seat.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
 Now as we all have so much, it is  
 so good to share.

Miss Burnett clasps her hands together in a Namaste gesture.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
 SO I hope you all remembered to  
 bring your new or -  
 (Gesturing with air  
 quotation marks)  
 - "pre-loved" toys with you to  
 class today.

Cupping her hands in the air on either side of her face and in a mock aside.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
 As long as they have been washed,  
 and are in lovable condition.

Poppy's eyes widen as a lightening bulb hits her.

B.G. Miss Burnett brings a BOX out from under her table, there are already many toys in it. Some of the girls get up from their desks and go to deposit their TOYS into the box.

POPPY (V.O.)  
Hey! Hey! Bunny? Are you thinking  
what I'm thinking?

ST BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
(Sleepily)  
Mmmm... fresh baby parsnips  
drizzled with black truffle sauce  
on a chestnut mas...

POPPY (V.O.)  
(Interjecting)  
NO! Now's our chance.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
(Snorting awake.)  
What did I miss?

Poppy CLICKS her tongue out loud. Realizing what she has done she ducks a little and looks around to see if anyone noticed. No one has noticed.

Poppy stand up from her desk and takes St. Bunnychrisp out of her backpack.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
What are you doing? Everyone can  
see me!

Poppy keeps walking down the row towards Miss Burnett. Holding toy-version St. Bunnychrisp in front of her with her arms wrapped around him - tightly!

Moirra looks back and sees Poppy.

POPPY (V.O.)  
That's right, be calm. Don't give  
the game away.

Moirra then sees St. Bunnychrisp. Moirra raises her eyebrows.

POPPY (V.O.)  
That's right, just play dead.

Poppy smiles serenely back at Moirra.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Poppy? Poppy!

Moira looks at Fatima to see if Fatima is seeing what she is seeing.

POPPY (V.O.)  
Don't worry... I have a plan.

Fatima is seeing this - she looks back at Moira. Moira questions Fatima with her eyebrows.

Fatima shrugs.

Poppy arrives at the teacher's desk and places her toy rabbit in the box with the other toys.

St. Bunnychrisp lies on top of a bed of toys.

MISS BURNETT  
Thank-you Poppy.  
(Addressing the whole class.)  
Now I need two volunteers to take the box to the Prefect's collection table at lunch-break today.

Poppy, still standing beside Miss Burnett, shoots her hand up in the air.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
Oh! Very enthusiastic. Right, uh... can I have ano...

Miss Burnett trails off as Moira and Fatima's hands have shot up in the air.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
Okay, well I only need two of you so, Fatima, you are a little stronger than... not that I meant because you are big. Just that Moira is so sm...  
(pausing and clears her throat)  
Thank-you Fatima. Moira, next time can be your turn. Oh and by the way...

Miss Burnett gestures twirly marks with her fingers above her ears.

Moira's hair has been plaited into a series of French braids - her hair all neatly tucked into the braids. Moira beams back proudly.

Miss Burnett sees that her gesture could be mistaken for "you're crazy" gestures. She hurriedly drops her hands to her sides.

MISS BURNETT (CONT'D)  
 Righty-o! Poppy, back to your desk.  
 (Addressing the class)  
 Let's start with grammar shall we?

Back in her comfort zone Miss Burnett heaves a big sigh of relief and gives the class a cheery grin.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL PREFECT'S HOME-ROOM - DAY

It is the lunchtime break and the Prefects have set up a donation STATION table outside the entrance to their baseroom. Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera are attending the table and receiving the boxes from the various different classvolunteers.

Poppy and Fatima make their way down the corridor towards the Donation Station, carrying the heavy box between them.

FATIMA (B.G.)  
 So she was waiting for Moira  
 outside the school. And she grabbed  
 Moira and Moira says she was like  
 "Argh" thinking Zinzi was attacking  
 her and Zinzi -

Poppy stops, lifts the flap up and checks that St. Bunnychrisp is not visible - he is mostly hidden by the other toys.

FATIMA (B.G.) (CONT'D)  
 - was telling Moira to be calm and  
 all. And then Moira said she was  
 like a Fairy godmother hairdressing  
 ninja and did her hair for her.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
 Remember, you have to get Jessica  
 to take the box from you.

POPPY  
 I know! I know!

FATIMA  
 Oh! But you just asked who did her  
 hair?

Poppy's attention is fixed on Jessica.

POPPY

Sorry, no, I mean, I was talking to  
myself of course.

Jessica looks up and locks her laser-beam eyes on Poppy.

Poppy gulps.

FATIMA

Of course.

Fatima realizes Poppy is distracted.

FATIMA (CONT'D)

So then Miss Burnett said that NASA  
has proved that the Moon is  
occupied by little white pebble  
creatures...

POPPY

Uh-huh.

Jessica motions to Kimera and Kimera looks up.

Poppy stumbles and the box nearly falls out her hands. The  
fumble shifts the weight of the toys and St. Bunnychrisp's head  
slides into view.

Poppy immediately changes course away from the Donation  
Station.

Fatima nearly loses her grip on her side of the box and rushes  
to keep up with Poppy.

B.G. Jessica sends Kimera after Poppy.

KIMERA

Poppy!

Poppy freezes in her tracks and once again Fatima is caught  
short and drops her side of the box.

Poppy bends down to try and extract St. Bunnychrisp from the  
pile.

Kimera is on top of them.

KIMERA (CONT'D)

You weren't trying to sneak this  
home with you? Bit old for soft  
toys aren't we? Oh right I forgot,  
NOT!

Poppy shoves St. Bunnycrisp back under the other toys, wincing at her own rough treatment of him.

Kimera picks the box up.

KIMERA (CONT'D)  
(To Fatima)  
A little help?

Fatima helps her carry the box to the donation station.

Poppy watches, anxiously snapping her fingers.

At the donation station Zinzi reaches out for the box and takes it inside the prefects' room.

Foiled! Poppy's shoulder's droop - Now what?

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Did the Jessica take the box?

Poppy whips behind a corner and leans back against the wall.

POPPY (V.O.)  
NO! Now what?

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
I do not know, anything could  
happen next.

POPPY  
Not if I can help it.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

Poppy is running alongside the outside of the building bent over so that no-one can see her from the windows.

INT. PREFECT'S HOME-ROOM - DAY

Poppy's head pops up over the edge of the windowsill as she peeks into the room.

The room is empty - the prefect's are all in the corridor outside.

Poppy eases up the sash-window.

Poppy squirms through the narrow opening.

Poppy falls into a heap inside the room.

Poppy jumps up and scurries behind the CURTAIN.

Jessica, Zinzi and Kimera enter the room carrying boxes.

JESSICA  
Don't be so sensitive Zinzi.

KIMERA  
We were only joking.

JESSICA  
Maybe she just doesn't get our  
sense of humour?

Jessica and Kimera flounce out the room leaving Zinzi behind.

Zinzi twists around looking first one way and then the other  
trying to look over her shoulder.

Poppy watches through a gap in the curtain.

Zinzi stops and takes a deep breath and then does a smoothing  
down gesture over her body.

Zinzi exits the room.

Poppy leaps out from behind the curtain.

There is a big stack of cardboard boxes - but, which one is her  
class donation?

Poppy has no choice but to hastily take each box and open it.

After the fourth box - Poppy strikes gold - there are St.  
Bunnycrisp's ears. She begins to breathe a sigh of relief when  
she hears someone at the door.

Poppy dives behind the boxes.

Jessica walks into the room. Jessica picks up her blazer and  
heads for the door.

As Jessica gets to the door she stops and turns to look around  
at the boxes and sees that some of them are open. She starts  
walking towards the boxes.

The BELL RINGS.

Jessica pauses, takes another step forward, pauses, shrugs and  
then heads for the door.

Poppy breathes a sign of relief.



EXT. FANTASY FOREST - NIGHT

Poppy has her eyes closed. She then opens them and her eyes pop into BIG EYES. Her ears become pointy with little tufts of fur at the top.

Poppy reaches up and feels her ears.

POPPY

What am I?

A terrible scream pierces the night and Poppy looks up, her eyes and ears scanning the trees and air for more information.

St. Bunnychrisp looks at Poppy, grabs her hand and begins to run, dragging Poppy behind him.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Quick! Or they will catch us.

Poppy and St. Bunnychrisp dart through the forest, jumping over roots, and dodging vines.

POPPY

Who will catch us?

The sound of thundering water becomes louder. St. Bunnychrisp points through the trees.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Through there... we've got to get to the waterfall.

Shadows form, swooping through the trees above them. Eyes glow like coals amongst the dark branches.

The trees thin and ahead of them a river rushes through the forest.

The river gathers into a pool before tumbling over the precipice into a plain far below.

St Bunnychrisp and Poppy come sliding to a halt above the pool.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)

You have to jump in - they won't follow.

POPPY

NO! I can't - I'm too scared - what if I go over the edge?

ST BUNNYCRISP  
Poppy jump!

Poppy grabs St. Bunnychrisp's paw, takes a great big breath and together they leap.

Poppy comes gasping to the surface of the water.

Poppy looks around in panic and sees St. Bunnychrisp eyes just above the surface of the water. Laughter bubbles rise up and pop on the surface.

Poppy looks up into the branches above them.

Her eyes adjust to allow her to see in the dark. She sees that they are surrounded by a troupe of the cutest big-eyed furry BUSHBABIES / NAGAPIES (Galagos). These are the creatures whose eyes and ears St. Bunnychrisp has magicked on Poppy.

Poppy splashes St. Bunnychrisp in indignation.

The Nagapies leap up and down in the tree branches and hoot and shriek.

EXT. SAME, A LITTLE LATER

Poppy and St. Bunnychrisp are seated at a fire next to the waterfall edge. The MOON is one night from being full.

Nagapies are sitting all over St. Bunnychrisp and Poppy is cradling a little one in her lap, another is on her shoulder with its tail wrapped around her neck.

They are roasting mushrooms on a stick over the fire.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
All forgiven now?

Poppy tries to give him a mock scowl but she can't help smiling. She looks at St. Bunnychrisp and suddenly becomes serious.

POPPY  
Will I still get to see you...  
still get to come here?

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
I can't promise I'll always be  
here, in this place.  
But I'll always be here -  
(Taps Poppy on her  
forehead)  
(MORE)

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)  
- you just have to think of me and  
I'll be wherever you are.

POPPY  
I'm not mad am I?

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
Do I seem real to you?

POPPY  
Yes.

St. Bunnychrisp detaches the various Nagapies from his body and gets up. He crouches down in front of Poppy.

The moon is shining in the sky behind him, framed between his ears.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
What do you see?

POPPY  
You.

St Bunnychrisp nods.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
And?

POPPY  
The Moon?

St. Bunnychrisp gives her a nod and another questioning "look harder" look.

Poppy studies the moon.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
A face?

ST BUNNYCRISP  
That's what everyone sees. Look  
closer.

St. Bunnychrisp taps under his right eye.

The moon has an image of a rabbit in silhouette. Poppy gasps and looks at St. Bunnychrisp.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
I will be out there, looking out  
for you. And on full-moon nights we  
can come and visit here.

Poppy gives a big hug to St. Bunnycrisp.

St. Bunnycrisp's hands waver in the air, then his left arm gently lowers to embrace Poppy.

St. Bunnycrisp scoops up Poppy and sits down with Poppy on his lap, cradled against his chest. He looks up at the moon and blinks rapidly.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, SENIOR GIRL'S GYM LOCKER-ROOM - DAY

The Grade 7 class has just finished their gym class and the girls are in various states of post-gym exercise clean-up.

Poppy sneaks into the locker-room carrying a bundle of clean white towels. The tips of St Bunnycrisp's ears are sticking out from the middle of the pile.

Poppy is an unnoticeable presence to the older Grade 7 girls who are all caught up in their own conversations and dramas.

Poppy walks slowly and silently trying not to attract any attention. She comes to the last aisle of lockers.

Poppy pauses and looks around the corner of a locker.

Jessica is on her own in the aisle and is putting on her school shoes.

Poppy darts behind a large canvas LAUNDRY HAMPER. She watches Jessica over the top of the hamper.

Jessica notices that one of the lockers is slightly ajar. Jessica looks around, no-one around - check. She eases the door open slightly.

There is a cellphone in the locker.

Jessica picks up the cellphone. She selects the camera icon. She flicks through the images. A sly and satisfied smile slips onto her face. She selects 'SEND TO ALL CONTACTS' and presses 'SEND'.

Jessica slips the cellphone back into the locker and closes it.

Jessica breezes up the row towards the laundry hamper. Poppy ducks down further.

Jessica throws her towel at the laundry hamper. The towel lands half in and half over the edge, flopping onto Poppy's head. Poppy steels herself - she does not flinch.

Jessica breezes out the locker-room as CELL-PHONES begin to buzz around the locker-room.

Snickers of laughter erupt into guffaws.

Zinzi comes running into the aisle Jessica has vacated. She punches a code into the locker Jessica found the phone in and wrenches the door open. She picks up her cellphone.

Zinzi frantically finds her sent items and sees the image that has been sent out from her phone. She covers her mouth and then sits down shakily on the BENCH in the middle of the aisle.

The school BELL RINGS.

The Grade 7 girls make haste to exit amidst laughter and comments like "Oh my word... Can you believe it?" "Such a loser!", "How vain!" "Who does she think she is?" "What an attention queen!" which bounce back into the locker-room and reach the ears of both Poppy and Zinzi now sitting sobbing on the bench. The door slams shut and echoing silence follows.

Poppy stays hunched down behind the laundry-hamper, unsure of what to do next, she waits.

Zinzi continues to cry.

Zinzi looks up to see Poppy standing at the top of the aisle. She quickly wipes her tears away.

ZINZI

What do you want? Juniors are not allowed in this locker-room.

POPPY

Miss Schechter, the gym...

ZINZI

(Interjecting)

I know who the gym teacher is!

Poppy swallows and then takes a bracing breath.

POPPY

Miss Schechter wanted me to give these towels to Jessica. But she's gone and I don't know her combo to her locker.

ZINZI

Of course not! Why would you?

Poppy looks down and shuffles her feet.

ZINZI (CONT'D)  
But don't worry. I do.

Zinzi gets up and punches the code into the lock mechanism on Jessica's locker.

Zinzi turns back to take the towels from Jessica.

Poppy brushes past her and deposits the pile in the locker then slams the door shut.

ZINZI (CONT'D)  
Excuse me?

Poppy turns around then flees.

Zinzi looks at Jessica's locker questioningly. Just then her cellphone buzzes.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - DAY

Poppy comes skipping out the school and hurries over to her mom's SUV. She opens the door and throws her bag in.

POPPY  
Hi mom!

GRACE  
Don't you 'hi' me missy. You are way too chipper for someone who has just got out of detention AGAIN! I do not like this new trend! What is going on?

Just then Poppy sees Jessica and a group of Grade 7 girls in their tennis kits on their way to the change rooms.

THE SCENE GOES INTO SLOW MOTION AS THE GIRLS APPROACH THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE.

POPPY (V.O.)  
Jessica's heading for the locker room.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (V.O.)  
Good, she'll pick up the towel and then I will be in her hands. Good work Poppy.

CUT TO:

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, SENIOR GIRL'S GYM LOCKER-ROOM - DAY

Jessica takes the bundle of towels out of her locker. St.

Bunnycrisp falls out from between the towels.

Jessica scoops him up, looks at him quizzically and then stuffs him in her GYM BAG.

Jessica walks out the locker-room with St. Bunnycrisp's ears sticking out her gym bag.

CUT TO:

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - DAY

POPPY

No! I'm not ready to let you go!

Poppy slams the door and runs back to the school building. A perplexed Grace calls after her.

GRACE

Poppy!

Poppy overtakes Jessica and Co.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL CORRIDORS - DAY

Poppy runs and skids through the corridors.

INT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, SENIOR GIRL'S GYM LOCKER-ROOM - DAY

Poppy flies into the locker-room and skids to a halt. She runs down the corridor of lockers. With fumbling fingers she punches in Jessica's code and removes St. Bunnycrisp from the pile of towels

The locker-room doors burst open.

Poppy hurriedly wraps St. Bunnycrisp in a towel and spins around hiding the bundle behind her back.

Jessica turns the corner to her locker and sees Poppy. Jessica stops. Kimera and Zinzi bump into Jessica.

Jessica slowly stalks towards Poppy.

JESSICA  
What are you doing here? And why is  
my locker open?

Poppy takes a few steps back.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
What are you hiding?

Poppy remains silent. Jessica  
walks over to Poppy.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
You've been acting weird this whole  
week. What are you up to?

Jessica reaches behind Poppy and forcibly grabs the bundle from  
Poppy.

The towel rolls open. St. Bunnychrisp falls onto the floor.

Jessica and Poppy both reach for him. Jessica takes him by the  
ears and Poppy by the body.

JESSICA (CONT'D)  
Give, it, to, me!

POPPY  
NO!

They begin a grim, silent tug of war.

With a sickening rip St. Bunnychrisp's head separates from his  
body.

Poppy lets out a strangled scream.

Jessica looks at her in horror and drops St. Bunnychrisp's head  
to the ground.

JESSICA  
(Picking up her towel she  
slams her locker shut)  
Whatevs! Weirdo!

Jessica signals for her crew to follow, they do so but in  
silence and with concerned backward glances at Poppy.

Poppy crumples to the floor and picks St Bunnychrisp's head up  
and holds it again his body.



POPPY

Bunny? Bunny? Answer me... are you  
still there?

Poppy collapses in sobs cradling St. Bunnychrisp's head and  
body.

Grace walks briskly in looking for Poppy.

GRACE

Poppy?

Grace sees her daughter on the floor.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Poppy... are you hurt?

Poppy shakes her head and then slowly nods.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Let me see.

Grace prises Poppy's fingers apart and St. Bunnychrisp head and  
body roll onto the floor.

Grace's catches her breath and then tenderly picks his head and  
body up.

GRACE (CONT'D)

I don't understand. Who did this?

Poppy looks away.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Tell me.

POPPY

(hesitantly)

Jessica.

Grace shakes her head and Poppy withdraws from her in anger.

GRACE

But why?

POPPY

Because she's mean.

Grace looks at Poppy and then at St. Bunnychrisp, she scoops  
Poppy into her arms.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Poppy is lying on her bed. Grace is stitching St. Bunnychrisp's head back on. She finishes and holds him at arm's length to admire her work.

GRACE

There, all better.

POPPY

No it's not! I killed him, He's dead.

GRACE

Poppy he's not dead, he's just a toy!

Grace holds St. Bunnychrisp to her nose and smells him.

GRACE (CONT'D)

A still smoky one at that.  
Maybe I should give him another spin in the...

POPPY

(Interjecting)

NO! No! He might come back to life and then he'll drown!

Poppy grabs St. Bunnychrisp from her mother's arms.

GRACE

Really Poppy! This is getting ridiculous. I can't deal with this. He's a toy, just a soft toy. And one that just a few days ago you didn't want.

Grace gets up, she struggles to find the words to deal with the situation. She heaves a big sigh of exasperation.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Now tomorrow we'll be having Fatima and Moira around for a little party, so you need to get some sleep.

POPPY

I don't want another party. I just want Bunny back.

GRACE

You sure you don't want a party? It  
may just be the thing to cheer you  
up?

POPPY

(Fiercely)

NO! I just want to be alone.

Grace bends down and strokes Poppy's forehead and kisses Poppy.

GRACE

Okay, I'll call Fami and Moi's mums  
and let them know, maybe Sunday?

Poppy rolls over and faces the wall.

Grace looks at Poppy with concern, then with a sigh she turns  
and leaves the bedroom, closing the door behind her.

As soon as Grace is gone Poppy sits up and holds St. Bunnychrisp  
out in front of her.

POPPY

Bunny? Saint Bunnychrisp?

(Bringing him closer to  
her face and in her head  
she asks him)

Can you hear me?

There is no response, Poppy crumples into tears.

INT. INSIDE POPPY'S NIGHTMARE WORLD - NIGHT

All is darkness.

POPPY'S P.O.V.

First Poppy's right arm then her left arm appear as she tries to  
feel her way in the darkness.

POPPY

Bunny? Saint Bunnychrisp... where  
are you? I can't find you.

Poppy looks up, she is at the bottom of what appears to be a  
well.

High above her is a small circle of night sky -illuminated by a  
little shining wavering blob - the full-moon.

P.O.V. LOOKING DOWN ON POPPY FROM THE TOP OF THE WELL

Poppy is dressed in her party clothes and is lying in a curled up heap on the floor.

Faintly in the distance is the sound of mournful crying, disconnected, lost, echoing.

A clicking, popping, chattering sound starts to thread through the sound of Poppy's crying, coming from afar, nearer and nearer.

Poppy sits up, rubs her tears away and looks around, the distant echoes of her crying fades away.

RUSHING DOWN TOWARDS POPPY

As the P.O.V. sweeps down to Poppy a high-frequency feedback sonic whistle pierces through the darkness.

Poppy recoils, clamps her hands over her ears and scrunches up her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Poppy is sitting up in her bed with her hands covering her ears.

The sonic whistle comes to an abrupt end - radio silence.

Poppy opens her eyes cautiously - she is back in her bedroom, in her pajamas.

PIXEL (O.S.)  
(Muffled and coming from a  
distance)  
Poppy, Poppy is me, is Pixel,  
Poppy's ting.

Poppy slowly lowers her hands from her ears and looks around.

Poppy sees Pixel on the bed in front of her. Pixel is perched on her hind legs, her little hands up below her chin and her whiskers bristling about.

POPPY  
Oh Pixel, Saint Bunnycrisp is gone.

PIXEL (V.O.)  
 Yes, yes, quick, quick, Poppy come  
 wit Pixel. Pixel take Poppy to  
 Queen Mab. Queen Mab tell Poppy  
 what to do. Quick, quick.

POPPY  
 You're talking, I can hear you and  
 I can understand you.

PIXEL (V.O.)  
 YES! Yes! Bunny put bug in Pixel's  
 ear. Itchy itchy, now I talk to  
 Poppy.

Poppy starts to laugh.

POPPY  
 It's a dream!

Pixel scrambles over Poppy's lap up on to her pillow and leaps  
 across to the desk. Pixel scampers over to the window. She  
 stands up against the window and points to the full-moon  
 through the glass.

PIXEL  
 Big moon, see?

Poppy gets up from her bed and looks through the window at the  
 full-moon, she nods at Pixel, playing along.

PIXEL (CONT'D)  
 There Puka - Poppy's Bunny. Other  
 side, Pixel.

Pixel looks up at Poppy to see if she is following her. Poppy  
 nods, amused.

PIXEL (CONT'D)  
 Is Poppy's moon. But see? Bunny  
 ears go way.

Poppy looks at the silhouette of St. Bunnychrisp, his ears are  
 beginning to fade away.

PIXEL (CONT'D)  
 Bunny bye-bye. Ony Poppy save  
 Bunny. If Poppy no hurry, Bunny  
 lose head.

This pulls Poppy in. The smile fades from her face.

POPPY

What do you mean Bunny will lose  
his head?

PIXEL

Bunny and Poppy break rules, be  
friends. Bunny no do mission. Now  
Bunny get punish, at clock hands

Pixel gestures with her hands together above her head, then dramatically she makes an X with her arms and then sweeps them apart.

PIXEL (CONT'D)

Bunny head off, Bunny no more.

Poppy gasps.

POPPY

(In teary panic)

On no! How can I help him? What  
must I do?

PIXEL

Come wit Pixel quick, quick.

Poppy nods fervently.

Pixel gestures to the window

PIXEL (CONT'D)

Stop-wind. Open.

Poppy opens the window.

PIXEL (CONT'D)

Pixel up.

Poppy scoops Pixel up gently.

Pixel points out into the night-sky

PIXEL (CONT'D)

Out go.

Poppy steps up onto her chair and then the desk. She pauses, views the drop out the window. Then she steps carefully onto the window-sill. Poppy wobbles, clutches Pixel to her chest, then catches her balance. Poppy breathes a sign of relief.

POPPY

What ne-

With a whoosh Poppy is pulled from the window ledge into the air and with a 'POP', disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT. FANTASY FOREST - NIGHT

Poppy tumbles to the ground. She sits up. Then on all-fours she scrambles around searching for Pixel.

A chirruping noise alerts her and she looks up to find Pixel on the ground a little way from her.

PIXEL

Pixel show way to Queen Mab.

Pixel gestures to Poppy to follow her, then scuttles off.

Poppy gets up and begins to run after Pixel.

Pixel darts through the forest with Poppy struggling to keep up. Eventually a glowing light becomes visible through the trees ahead.

Poppy and Pixel stumble into a clearing. It is aglow with a light that emanates from a circle of luminescent mushrooms. Poppy tries to shield her eyes to see what is beyond the light.

QUEEN MAB O.S. (O.S.)

(In a commanding,  
otherworldly, echoing  
voice)

Step into the circle.

Poppy picks up Pixel. Pixel clasps her hands under her chin and is all a-trembling with fear.

Poppy steps into the circle. The light dims and Poppy looks around with fearful amazement.

In the centre of the circle is a giant tree. At the base of the tree is a throne. Seated upon the throne is a woman. Surrounding the throne is a large entourage of mythical creatures and animals.

QUEEN MAB

Come closer!

Poppy steps closer and looks up into the woman's face, she gasps for Queen Mab looks like her mother.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

Well, where are your manners?

Poppy hesitates, uncertain what to do. She then tries a deep low curtsy. This seems to meet with the Queen's approval.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

What have you brought me?

Poppy is confused.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

Come, come, that which is in your hand!

POPPY

You mean Pixel? No... I didn't...

QUEEN MAB

(Angrily interjecting)

You have come into the presence of a Queen and you do not bring an offering?

POPPY

I, I...

QUEEN MAB

You thought you might seek my council and not have to give me something in exchange?

Queen Mab looks around the circle of creatures.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

How like a human child to expect something for nothing. Knowledge has a price that must be paid. Innocence must be sacrificed.

POPPY

Sacrificed?

QUEEN MAB

You DO wish to save the Puka do you not?

POPPY

The Puka?



QUEEN MAB  
Oh this is getting dreary -  
    (Releasing a long-  
        suffering sigh)  
- the rabbit.

POPPY  
The rab... YES! You know where he is?

QUEEN MAB  
I should, I sent him there.

POPPY  
Why?

QUEEN MAB  
You dare to challenge or question  
me?

POPPY  
YES! He did nothing wrong!

QUEEN MAB  
There you are most sorely wrong. He  
had a debt to pay and he failed me  
- I do not suffer being wronged.

POPPY  
But you sent him to me - it's your  
fault!

QUEEN MAB  
I, am never, at fault. So if I am  
not at fault, and he is not at  
fault, then it must be you who is  
at fault.

Poppy drops her head in shame and nods.

POPPY  
    (Very quietly in a small  
        voice)  
Yes, it was. I was supposed to  
leave him with Jessica but I  
couldn't. I just couldn't, I didn't  
want to loose him, I wanted him all  
to myself, just for a little while  
longer. And now I'm going to loose  
him for ever!

Poppy looks up and tries to summon her courage.

POPPY (CONT'D)

So please, whatever I have to do,  
please, please help me save him.

QUEEN MAB

Oh his fate no longer rests in my  
hands. Tonight he is the guest of  
dishonour at the Icemaiden's  
banquet. It is she whom you shall  
have to convince to release him.

Queen Mab laughs.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

Now hand me the dormouse.

POPPY

What? NO!

QUEEN MAB

I have told you where to find him  
and now this is the price you must  
pay.

POPPY

Wait! There has to be another way.  
If I release Bunny... the Puka - then  
we all go free, but if I don't  
succeed, then you can keep me, as  
long as you let Pixel free.

QUEEN MAB

Why would I want you?

POPPY

Because... I can do more than Pixel  
can, I can be useful.

QUEEN MAB

You little human. How arrogant of  
you to think that you are of  
greater use than the being in your  
hand.

POPPY

Oh! Sorry Pixel. No, I didn't mean.  
Oh what else, um... I can sing! I can  
sing for you.

QUEEN MAB

I have a whole forest full of  
birds, why would I want your  
pathetic warbling?

A Nagapie creeps into the middle of the light and bows low to the Queen. He is then joined by the rest of his family.

Queen Mab focuses her gaze upon them.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

It seems you have made some friends here. Tell me child, why would you do this?

POPPY

Because he's my friend. And friends help one another.

QUEEN MAB

(Musing upon this)

Oh really?

Queen Mab looks intently into Poppy's eyes. The queen gestures to a creature.

The creature makes his way to Poppy and extends his hands for Pixel.

Poppy hesitates, she looks into Pixels face.

Pixel summons her courage and nods to Poppy.

PIXEL

Pixel Poppy's special ting. Poppy save Bunny then come for Pixel. Pixel know all be good good.

Poppy resolves herself, then hands Pixel to the creature.

POPPY

(To Pixel)

I'll be back, I promise.

Pixel looks back longingly to Poppy.

QUEEN MAB

You can only break the seal upon his fate this full-moon. The fate of both your friends rests in your hands tonight.

Poppy looks after the retreating creature and Pixel in alarm.

QUEEN MAB (CONT'D)

Go child go! The Icemaideen dines at her stone table in the south tonight.

With one last look at Pixel, Poppy turns around and steps over the mushrooms and all at once the forest is plunged back into darkness.

POPPY  
 (Looking around  
 hesitantly)  
 Which way is south? Which way...

Poppy turns round and round.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 Oh come on... think! Think! Think!  
 (Searching around for the  
 answer.)  
 The waterfall!

Poppy runs through the forest towards the sound of rushing water.

EXT. FANTASY FOREST, THE WATERFALL - NIGHT  
 This is the fantasy world which is overlaid onto Poppy's world - so while it is the "Cape Flats with Table Mountain" in the distance, this is the fantasy version - sans all its present day buildings, roads and man-made features.

Poppy emerges into the clearing next to the waterfall pool.

Poppy makes her way cautiously towards the edge until the canopy of trees clears and she can see the night sky filled with stars and the full moon.

Poppy searches the sky for the Southern Cross. She holds her hand up and draws a line across to the guiding star and down towards the horizon. Poppy gasps as across the plain she sees Table Mountain in the far distance.

POPPY  
 The Stone Table...

Poppy surveys the drop of the waterfall down to the plain far below and the great distance between her and the mountain. Poppy becomes overwhelmed at the daunting task ahead of her. She sits down in a collapsed bundle on the rocks.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 (Raising her head to look  
 at the moon)  
 How am I ever going to get there?  
 If you can hear me, please help?

Poppy waits and then she hears a rustling in the trees around her.

The big eyes of the Nagpaies reflect the moonlight. Poppy lets out a sob when she sees them.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I don't know how I'm going to do  
this, I'm so afraid.

The Nagpies climb down the trunks and onto the cliff face below Poppy. One of them gestures to Poppy to follow them.

Poppy comprehends but shakes her head in fear.

The Nagapie gives her a "but you must" nod of his head. Poppy shakes her head.

The little Nagapie scurries up to her and pulls at her finger. Again Poppy shakes her head, he then looks up at the moon and back at Poppy.

St. Bunnycrisp's ears have nearly completely faded from the moon.

Poppy gasps and with fearful trepidation she eases herself over the ledge.

With the Nagapies guiding her way she begins to climb shakily down the rock face.

Poppy reaches the bottom of the rock face, she dusts her hands off and looks around and realizes she still has a very long way to go.

She looks back at the Nagapies anxiously. The biggest Nagapie puts his head back and lets out a terrible shriek. Poppy covers her ears. The call echoes around the rocks and out onto the plain. Poppy looks at him in horrified amazement. She then hears a sound of RUNNING STEPS approaching.

An ostrich appears running towards Poppy at full speed.

Poppy flattens her back against the cliff, closes her eyes tight shut and turns her head away.

The ostrich screeches to a halt just in front of Poppy and then smartly taps her on the shoulder with his beak. Poppy does not respond, the ostrich taps her again.

Poppy opens one eye to find herself looking into the giant, long lashed eyes of the ostrich.

He straightens up and gives a quick motion of his head to indicate Poppy must get on her back. Poppy refuses.

The Nagapies chirrup and twitter their laughter at her.

The ostrich pulls at Poppy's hair.

POPPY (CONT'D)

Hey!

Poppy becomes resolute, sums up her courage and after a few unsuccessful attempts gets onto his back.

With a great leap forward, which nearly dislodges Poppy, he sets off at a flying pace across the plain, with Poppy clinging on for dear life.

It takes a few bounding bouncy strides for Poppy to find out how to hunch forward and hold on to the top of the Ostrich's wings. As she settles in the Ostrich accelerates his speed.

EXT. THE BASE OF 'STONE TABLE' - NIGHT

The Ostrich comes tearing up to the base of the mountain and stops so suddenly that Poppy nearly goes over his head.

She slides off of him.

She turns to survey the steep sides of the mountain and the great distance to the top.

The Ostrich becomes distracted by a firefly and watches it flittering around his head.

POPPY

(Turning to the Ostrich)

How'm I going to...

She cuts off her question as the Ostrich races off after the firefly snapping at it.

Poppy watches him rushing off and in turning back to the mountain she sees that the moon has passed overhead and is disappearing over the top of the mountain. Time is running out. She begins to fret.

POPPY (CONT'D)

I'll never get to the top in time...  
Oh what must I do?

Poppy panics and begins to try to make her way up the mountain but keeps losing her footing; she slides down to her starting point.

Frustrated and angry she lets out a growl and kicks a stone.

The stone bounces along the ground and startles a rabbit out of hiding.

The rabbit flees along a little pathway that leads into a cleft on the side of the mountain.

Poppy runs after it.

EXT. THE 'STONE TABLE' - NIGHT

A Cleft (Platteklip Gorge) which cuts into the mountain.

The rabbit runs into the cleft and down a hole.

Poppy comes running in after it. She turns around trying to find the rabbit.

POPPY

You led me here for a reason... now  
where is the route I must take?

(Clearing her throat then  
calling out into the  
darkness as confidently  
as she can muster)

Please, show me the way.

Poppy waits, then she notices a spot of light, then another a little further ahead, then one after the other flickering along, little glow worms light up revealing the path as it zig-zags up the mountain side.

POPPY (CONT'D)

Thank-you!

Poppy surges up the path following the little lights as they guide her along the way. At times she has to edge along narrow little pathways with steep drop-offs, at other times steps have been carved into the rocks.

The path opens onto a wider ledge just beneath the final sheer rock-face. Poppy looks around trying to work out how to climb the vertical surface.

The moon is now no longer visible to her as it has passed over the top of the mountain and the side that Poppy is on is left in darkness.

Poppy edges along the ledge trying to find the path when she turns a corner and sees the glow worms flashing their way into the mouth of a dark cave, the glow of their lights are instantly obscured by its overwhelming darkness.

Poppy backs away from the cave.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
(Shaking her head)  
Uh-uh!

Poppy begins to search the cliff for a hand-hold so she can climb its sides.

She finds a section that allows her to climb a few metres. Poppy loses her grip and comes sliding down.

Winded and sore Poppy gets up from the ground and faces the cave.

INT. THE DARK CAVE - NIGHT

Poppy makes her way slowly and cautiously, struggling to find where to put her feet, her knees quaking with fear.

With her left hand against the cave wall to guide her, she holds out her right hand which she waves out before her in the darkness. Stifling a sob of fear, she makes slow progress.

POPPY  
Please, I can't see where I'm  
going... light my way.

A fire fly comes floating past Poppy and settles on her right hand, then another and another. She watches with growing joy and amazement as her hand is covered in fire-flies and becomes her own glowing torch to guide her way.

The cave goes deeper and deeper into the mountain and becomes a narrow passageway. The gradient becomes steeper and then becomes a rock stairway, which she climbs.

Poppy is labouring up the staircase as fast as she can when she hears a soft cough coming from ahead of her.

She freezes, like a silent explosion the fire-flies lift off her hand, leaving Poppy in darkness.

Once again Poppy has to feel her way in the darkness.



The staircase comes to a corner around which a soft light glows. Poppy hesitates before looking cautiously around it.

INT. THE DUNGEON - THE ICEMAIDEN'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Poppy stifles a gasp as she sees a cage with St. Bunnycrisp inside. He is slumped down, lifeless.

To the side are TWO GUARDS (monstrous hybrid creatures) playing a board game (a version of Mancala involving stones).

Poppy ducks back around the corner.

POPPY  
(very quietly to herself)  
Oh, what to do? Think brain, THINK!

Poppy shuffles her feet in agitation and sets a little rock shower tumbling down the stairs.

She freezes but the Guards are too busy concentrating and have not heard.

Poppy collects a few of the little pebbles. She edges her head around the corner revealing one eye. Taking quick aim she throws a stone at the First Guard's head, and ducks quickly away.

The stone hits its target and the First Guard slaps at his face.

Poppy repeats this with the Second Guard.

The Second Guard hits his face.

Poppy repeats the action, throwing a stone at the First Guard.

This time the Second Guard slaps the First Guard's face for him.

The First Guard bellows in double outrage. St.

Bunnycrisp stirs and opens one eye.

St. Bunnycrisp spies a movement at the far dark corner of the dungeon.

Poppy throws a stone at the Second Guard.

The Second Guard flinches and the First Guard slaps him.

St. Bunnycrisp sees Poppy and he sits up alert. Poppy sees this - she is thrilled.

Without attracting the guard's attention St. Bunnycrisp tries to signal Poppy to stop.

Poppy gives him a shake of her head, and quick as a flash throws another stone, then quickly ducks away.

The guards look at one another in confusion.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

(To the Guards)

You going to let him get away with that?

FIRST GUARD

Wat?

SECOND GUARD

Wie?

FIRST GUARD

(Pointing to the Second Guard)

Dzjy!

SECOND GUARD

(Stabbing his thumb at his chest.)

Ekka?

ST. BUNNYCRISP

I saw it, it was him!

SECOND GUARD

(Pointing to the First Guard)

Djy!

FIRST GUARD

Nie!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

It was him!

FIRST GUARD

Dzjy!

SECOND GUARD

Uh-uh, is djy!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Are you going to let him get away with that? That would be an insult to your intelligence.

FIRST GUARD

Ek sal jou weis. Ekke sal jou bliksem!

SECOND GUARD

Naai, ek sal jou bliksem!

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Yes, bliksem him. HIT HIM!

The Guards then rise up against one another and begin to swing away, each connecting the other.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)

That's it! Hit him with your chair!

Each pick up their stools simultaneously and swing, both stools connect the opposite Guard's head and both Guards fall backwards hitting their heads against the stone floor, knocking them out cold.

Poppy darts out from behind her corner and runs over to the cage.

Poppy reaches in and grasps hold of St. Bunnychrisp's paw.

ST. BUNNYCRISP (CONT'D)

Poppy! What are you doing here? You have to leave. The Icemaiden is cruel and if she finds you she will take you prisoner too.

Poppy grabs the lock and tries to shake it loose.

POPPY

NO! I've come to rescue you.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

You have already rescued me. Until you, I was mean. But you changed all of that, you gave me love. But I was supposed to teach you how to be brave, to have courage.

POPPY

You mean that was why you were sent to me... not Jessica?

St. Bunnycrisp nods.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 But, but I am brave!  
 (Realisation dawns)  
 I have to get to Queen Mab, I have  
 to tell her! You haven't failed.  
 You've changed, and you changed me.  
 I'm going to fix this...

Poppy breaks off and runs up the corridor leading away from the  
 dungeon, St. Bunnycrisp calls after her.

INT. DUNGEON CORRIDOR - ICEMAIDEN'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Poppy runs slap bang into a monstrous huge THIRD GUARD.

THIRD GUARD  
 Jislaaik! What kind of monster is  
 you?

POPPY  
 Uh... uh... I...

Poppy darts from side to side in front of him so he cannot  
 enter the dungeon and see the first and second guards passed  
 out stone cold on the floor.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 Uh... I'm the entertainment, yes!  
 I'm here to sing for the Icemaiden.  
 I got lost.

THIRD GUARD  
 You better shake a leg missy. The  
 boss lady is not going to like the  
 look of you. Better ask for a mask.

Poppy is about to get indignant, then checks herself.

POPPY  
 You shall have to show me the way!  
 For if I am late I shall say it was  
 your fault, that you did not help  
 me!

The Guard considers this, turns around and leads Poppy up a  
 dark passage as he mumbles disgruntledly to himself.

THIRD GUARD  
 Pikkie do this! Pikkie do that! All  
 blerrie day long.  
 (MORE)

THIRD GUARD (CONT'D)  
 And now from this snot lap! It is  
 not a guard's life, I can tell you  
 that for free.

INT. SERVICE CORRIDOR - ICEMAIDEN'S CASTLE - NIGHT

The Guard and Poppy emerge from the dark passageway into the castle's service corridors.

Everything is a hustle and bustle for the banquet. The guard hands Poppy over to some FEMALE CREATURES that escort Poppy away.

INT. BANQUET HALL - ICEMAIDEN'S CASTLE - NIGHT

The dining room of the castle has a long dining table - with a seemingly endlessly dark and fathomless space above it. The table is set with crystal, silver and porcelain.

Poppy is led into the banquet hall by the MAITRE'D. She has been dressed in a CREATURE MASK which covers her eyes and nose.

Poppy is escorted to a PLATFORM at the end of the LONG TABLE.

She is pushed up the steps to the top.

Poppy surveys the hall around her.

Poppy looks down the length of the banquet table in front of her. SMALL CAGES and BELL-JARS contain the frightened PETS of the CHILDREN who are seated at the table.

The Children are dressed in their PYJAMAS and have DOLL-LIKE MASKS covering their faces. The masks are painted with bigbright smiles, but behind the mask are scared and teary eyed little girls and boys. The children's wrists are tied to strings - they have been turned into puppets.

Sitting alongside the children are the loathsome creatures of their nightmares - CUPBOARD MONSTERS.

The Cupboard Monsters taunt the caged little animals by drooling, licking their lips and sharpening their knives and forks in front of them.

The strings tied to the children's wrists run up to a framework suspended up above the table and run down the length to the end where the Ice maiden controls them. The strings are tied to RINGS on her fingers. The ICEMAIDEN has white blond hair reaching to the floor, the palest white skin, and cold turquoise eyes. A CROWN OF CRYSTAL sits upon her head.

The Icemaider's hands hang in mid-air as she runs her fingers side to side as though she is playing an invisible piano.

This pulls the strings attached to the children's hands causing them to jerk around and slap themselves or to slap the monsters beside them.

The monsters react with ferocious growls, which causes even greater terror in the child concerned.

The Icemaider laughs shrilly at the orchestra of chaos she is creating.

Poppy gasps as her eyes settle on the Icemaider, for she looks like Jessica.

The Icemaider stops and raises her gaze slowly to Poppy on the platform.

A silence falls upon the gathering.

ICEMAIDER

What lowly thing is this before me?

MAITRE'D

(Bowing low)

The entertainment, princesssss.

ICEMAIDER

Well then entertain me creature.

And if I am not satisfied, you  
shall share the fate of the rabbit.

Poppy swallows and fidgets as she thinks of something to sing.

The Icemaider slams her hands down on the table; this causes all the little children's hands to be drawn straight up in the air.

ICEMAIDER (CONT'D)

SING!

POPPY

(Leaping into the first  
thing that comes to mind)

Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping  
through the forest, scooping up the  
field mice, and stomping on their  
heads...

As Poppy continues to haltingly sing the song The Cupboard Monsters grunt and sing tunelessly along and do the accompanying hand movements.

The Icemaider is thrilled with the choice and laughing she sweeps her hands about in time to the music, conducting the children to swipe at the Cupboard Monsters next to them.

The Cupboard Monsters become annoyed and snarl at their child, who cower in fear.

Poppy sees the misery and terror of the children and cannot contain herself any longer.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
STOP IT! STOP IT!

The gathering freezes in surprise.

The Icemaider swiftly rises from her throne, drawing her fists to her side.

This causes all the children to be raised by their wrists and to dangle helplessly in the air.

THE ICEMAIDER  
Seize her!

Before the Guards can react, Poppy leaps from the platform, onto the table.

She grabs a sword by the hilt from a Guard.

Poppy races down the length of the table, leaping over obstacles as she swings left and right with the sword, severing the strings above the wrists of the children.

As each child is set free they drop to their seats. The Icemaider recoils in fury.

As Poppy cuts the cord of the last child and swoops towards the Icemaider a FOURTH GUARD seizes her.

The Icemaider rises from her seat and rips the mask off a struggling Poppy.

THE ICEMAIDER (CONT'D)  
(Releasing a high pitched  
trill of laughter)  
The child the Puka was sent too.  
How appropriate...  
(Beat)  
Bring him in! It is time!

SAME, A LITTLE LATER

Poppy is inside a large heavy Bell-jar on the banquet table. She is beating soundlessly against its sides.

The cage containing St. Bunnycrisp is wheeled into the banquet hall.

St. Bunnycrisp sees Poppy in the Bell-jar and becomes enraged.

The commotion causes the children to come out of their catatonic states of fear and one by one they start to slide their masks off to see what it happening around them.

St. Bunnycrisp's cage is wheeled to the platform.

Two very large and grotesque beasts pull a struggling St. Bunnycrisp from his cage and drag him onto the platform.

At a gesture from the Icemaiden, two creatures begin to turn the handle attached to a large cog system that opens the roof of the banquet hall revealing the night sky above them. The moon is directly above.

The silhouette of the rabbit has nearly been erased from the surface of the moon. Seeing this Poppy summons up all her strength and begins to rock against the sides of the Bell- jar.

Poppy catches the attention of the children closest to her; she frantically gestures to them to help her but they shake their heads in fear.

Poppy squats down and focuses her attention on the child closest to her.

POPPY

(Her voice muffled as she  
is shouting through the  
glass, she gestures to  
St. Bunnycrisp)

You see that rabbit?

The CHILD furtively glances at St. Bunnycrisp and nods.

POPPY (CONT'D.) (CONT'D)

He was MY cupboard monster. But now  
he is my best friend.

This statement catches the attention of some of the other children and they begin to pay her more attention.



POPPY (CONT'D)  
 You have to help me; you have to  
 help me save him.

CHILD  
 (Mouthing quietly)  
 How?

POPPY  
 Push this jar over.

THE ICEMAIDEN  
 When the full moon rises again,  
 your precious Saint Bunnychrisp will  
 no longer be there - I shall have  
 erased him off the face of the  
 moon.  
 (Baying in blood lust)  
 OFF WITH HIS HEAD.

St. Bunnychrisp is forced to his knees.

POPPY  
 (Frantic)  
 PLEASE!

CUPOARD MONSTERS  
 (Rising to their feet and  
 in cacophonous unity)  
 OFF WITH HIS HEAD! OFF WITH HIS  
 HEAD!

The child looks at her Cupboard Monster in disgust, she then  
 climbs up onto the table and tries to push the Bell-jar over.

Poppy pushes her back up against the glass on the opposite side.

Some of the other children take courage and rise up and start to  
 push against the thick glass.

It begins to teeter.

Poppy crouches down as the glass goes tumbling over her head,  
 rolls off the side of the table and crashes to the floor.

At the crash everyone's attention is drawn away from the  
 platform.

The Executioner monster pauses with his battle-axe raised.

St. Bunnychrisp seizes the opportunity and rises to his legs, his  
 hands bound behind his back.

Poppy rises up.

ST. BUNNYCRISP  
(Calling to Poppy)  
Her crown Poppy, get her crown!

POPPY  
(Yelling to the children  
as she races down the  
table)  
Free the animals and RUN! RUN!

Chaos breaks out as the children begin to lift and push over jars and open cages. The animals and birds take the opportunity and all begin to run in the same direction.

BOY CHILD  
Follow them; they must know the way  
to escape!

The children race after the animals as the Cupboard Monsters and guards try to catch them, but the children duck under their lumbering limbs.

Poppy leaps across the final section of table.

The Icemaideen lets out a roar of fury and tries to catch Poppy.

A large Cupboard Monster, next to the Icemaideen, stands up and Poppy scales him like a staircase - arm, shoulder, head.

Before he can respond Poppy grabs the CARVING KNIFE out of his hand and swings it at the rope from which the puppet-frame is suspended and cuts the rope free.

Poppy grabs hold of the rope. As it pulls her up she drops the knife and swinging over the head of the Icemaideen, Poppy swipes the crystal crown from the Icemaideen's head.

The Icemaideen reaches up grasping at air.

The framework shifts weight and like a pendulum Poppy is swung back over the heads of the beasts that come running to the Icemaideen's service.

As Poppy is swung by the pendulum motion towards the end of the table, she let's go, landing near the platform.

Poppy jumps onto the platform and slashes through the bonds that tie St. Bunnychrisp with the crown.

Poppy grabs St. Bunnychrisp's paw. Together they race after the escaping animals and children.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ICEMAIDEN'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Poppy and St. Bunnycrisp lead the escape towards the edge.

They are being pursued by a horde of monsters with the Icemaider riding on the back of a beast bearing down on them.

Seeing the edge coming towards them Poppy begins to panic.

ST. BUNNYCRISP

Her crown, smash it! And then jump.

Poppy pauses, she turns calmly towards the Icemaider.

Poppy raises her hand holding the crown in the air.

The Icemaider sees Poppy's intention and stretches out her hand to stop her.

THE ICEMAIDER

Nooooooooo

With resolution Poppy slams the crown down on the rocks where it shatters.

As the crown shatters, the Crystal palace begins to crumble and the beasts begin to disintegrate into smoke and mist.

There is a flash of light and a popping sound and Poppy, St. Bunnycrisp, the children and their pets all disappear.

ACT THREE

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Poppy comes to and finds herself lying on her bedroom floor.

Grace comes running in to find Poppy stirring herself and slowly rising.

GRACE

Poppy? Did you fall?

Poppy pays her no attention.

Grace gently helps Poppy up.

Poppy looks around the room. She sees the soft-toy version of St. Bunnycrisp on the bed. Poppy pulls herself out of Grace's arms and runs to the bed. She grabs the toy.

POPPY

Bunny? Bunny are you back?

There is no response. Poppy drops him on the floor.

POPPY (V.O.)

(Looking around the room)

Saint Bunnycrisp... are you here?

Grace observes Poppy, but of course cannot hear her. Grace picks up the toy rabbit and tries to press it into Poppy's hands.

GRACE

Here he is, Poppy, here.

Poppy pushes Grace's hands away, not looking at her mother.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Poppy I think you've been having a nightmare.

Poppy looks around her bedroom.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Remember? He had his head pulled off? I sewed it back on.

Poppy races to the wardrobe and throws the doors open, but St. Bunnycrisp is not there.

POPPY

No, no, no, no, no! He was supposed to come back with me.

Poppy rushes to the doll-house.

Poppy looks through each window, searching room by room, but Pixel too is missing.

POPPY (CONT'D)

OH NO! I left Pixel behind. What am I going to do?

Grace tries to gently hold Poppy by the arms.

Poppy shakes her mother off.

Poppy clambers onto the table and stands up in the open window.

Poppy scans the night sky looking for the moon.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
I can't see the moon, I can't see  
it! Where is it?

Poppy steps forward and Grace lunges forward and grabs hold of Poppy and drags her back into the room.

Poppy tries to fight her mother off.

Grace holds Poppy tight to her chest and sits down on the floor holding onto her.

Poppy tries to struggle out of Grace's hold but Grace holds on as tight as she can.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
No! No! I have to see if he is back  
on the moon. I have to see if I was  
able to save him!

GRACE  
(Shouting for John to  
hear)  
JOHN? JOHN?

EXT. BACK GARDEN TERRACE, SOBUKWE HOME - DAWN CONTINUOUS

Poppy runs out onto the terrace with Grace and John hot on her heels.

Poppy runs around looking at the now light blue sky of dawn.

John catches her by the arm.

Poppy swings around to face him.

POPPY  
The moon Dad, I have to see the  
moon.

JOHN  
Its daytime Poppy, the moon has  
gone behind the horizon.

POPPY  
I can see that! But where is it  
night right now? In the world?

Grace and John look at each other. Grace gestures helplessly to John. After a second of hesitation John takes Poppy by the shoulders and directs her back inside the house.

INT. SOBUKWE LOUNGE - DAWN

There is a home office station in the corner of the lounge with a desk, chair and computer.

John sits at the computer and scoops Poppy onto his lap. Grace leans over his shoulder.

John clicks on the skype call icon on his screen and the skype CALL TONE sounds. They wait.

JOHN

If it's a clear night, your uncle  
Thabo should be able to see the  
full moon from his loft in New  
York.

The call tone ends and a window pops up on the screen showing John's brother THABO on the screen.

THABO

Hey! Hey! My favourite family.  
Howzit! What's up guys?

John looks at Poppy.

POPPY

Hi Uncle Thabo.

THABO

Kunjani ntchoncho wam?

POPPY

I'm fine thanks, and you?

THABO

All good. So what can I do for you,  
because I've got a feeling this is  
not just a social call.

POPPY

I need you to show me the moon  
outside.

THABO

Uuuh, okay.

On the screen Thabo gets up, lifts his laptop up and carries it outside with him. The view on the screen shows that he is turning this way and that.

Poppy looks anxiously at her father.

JOHN  
 If he can't see it we'll find  
 someone else who can.

Poppy nods.

The window on-screen shows Thabo turning his laptop around and holding it up to the night sky.

John clicks on the window to enlarge it to full-screen.

At first a few glittery stars make light-trails across the screen and then the moon fills the screen. Although upside down the silhouette of a rabbit and little dormouse are clearly visible.

Poppy lets out a sob of relief.

Poppy jumps up and hugs her mom and does a jig of joy.

THABO (B.G.)  
 What was that all about?

JOHN (B.G.)  
 We still have to figure that one  
 out. Cheers bro.

B.G. John ends off the call with Thabo.

Grace takes Poppy by the hand and leads her over to the couch and sits Poppy down in the middle, then sits beside her.

John joins them sitting on the other side of Poppy.

GRACE  
 Okay Poppy, we need to know what is  
 going on.

POPPY  
 You promise you'll listen and not  
 tell me I'm being silly or making  
 things up?

Grace take a breath, nods and puts her right hand on her heart.

INT. SOBUKWE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Poppy is seated in the corner of the couch with her legs under the throw. Grace is seated in the opposite corner of the couch, legs tucked under her. The coffee table has empty delivery boxes of food.

Empty plates and cups evidence the time gone by while Poppy has told her parents about her story. John is presently not in the room.

POPPY  
(Sitting forward)  
So now I know that Bunny is safe  
but I don't know how to get Pixel  
back.

The story told, Poppy releases the energy from her body with a big breath and sits back cautiously awaiting Grace's reaction.

Grace sits forward and places her head in her hands, for a while she is silent and then she shakes her head.

GRACE  
I don't believe this.

Poppy sits forward, fists clenched and face crumpled in hurt and anger.

POPPY  
But you promised!

Realizing Poppy has misunderstood her. Grace sits up and tries to embrace Poppy.

Poppy pushes her away and turns her face to the couch.

Grace pulls Poppy's chin to face her.

GRACE  
Poppy I want you to look me in the  
eyes.

Grace wipes Poppy's tears away while Poppy tries to pull her head out of Grace's hands. Grace stills her. Poppy drags her eyes to look into her mother's eyes

GRACE (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry I didn't listen to  
you. But I'm listening now. And I  
realize that I'm to blame for this.

Poppy tries to object.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
No, no, it's true.

Poppy covers her face and Grace pulls her hands away.



GRACE (CONT'D)  
I did to you what my mother did to  
me.

Poppy pulls away and blinks her tears back. She shakes her head.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
What I can't believe, is that I  
even made promises to myself... in  
the mirror!

Grace looks at Poppy and shakes her head in recognition and  
amazement of the recollection.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
When I was a little girl, I  
promised that one day, if I had a  
daughter, I would NOT tell her to  
be good, and sweet and nice.

Poppy's eyebrows crease together in confusion.

B.G. John enters the room wearing an Alice-band with white and  
pink bunny ears. Grace and Poppy do not see him. He pauses at  
the entrance and listens to Grace.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
Because that just took all my power  
away. And here I've been doing the  
same thing to you.

Poppy hides her face and shakes her head. Grace  
pulls her out the corner.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
It's true. I can see that now. And  
all this time I was thinking I was  
doing my job, looking after all the  
children I work with, looking after  
them.

Grace gestures helplessly lets out a snort of self-disbelief.

Poppy curls into a ball and Grace wraps her arms around her  
tightly.

GRACE (CONT'D)  
But Poppy, you're my first and most  
important job.

Grace rocks Poppy in her arms.

JOHN (O.S.)

And now it's my turn, to do my job.

Grace and Poppy uncurl from one another and look up to see John standing in front of them with the rabbit ears on.

Poppy is not sure if her father is mocking her. Grace is also cautious about this scenario.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm going to teach you how to stand up to Jessica.

John produces from behind his back a blond curly dress-up wig and a princess crown.

He places the wig and crown on Grace's head.

Poppy rips it off her mother head and throws it on the ground.

POPPY

NO!

JOHN

Okay, okay. Right I was going to do some role playing with your mom being Jessica but let's re-think this.

John picks the wig and crown up and looks at it thoughtfully, he scratches his head. He then takes off the bunny ears and puts the wig and crown on his head.

Grace looks at Poppy. A small smile begins to creep onto Poppy's face.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL, SERVICE ALLEY - DAY

Poppy, Fatima and Moira are waiting behind a RUBBISH SKIP next to the maintenance buildings.

FATIMA

But what if she does not come?

POPPY

Then we'll have to make another plan.

MOIRA

She'll come, she's good people.

Approaching footsteps are heard. The three girls freeze and wait.

ZINZI (O.S.)  
 (Speaking to herself.)  
 I cannot believe I'm doing this.  
 (Clearing her throat)  
 Cook-a-roo-coo.

POPPY (O.S.)  
 Pssssttt!

Zinzi, in her hockey kit, is looking around the service alley.

A small hand beckons her from behind the skip.

Zinzi walks around the skip.

Moira, Fatima and Poppy are all standing huddled together looking very anxious.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 Are you alone?

ZINZI  
 Of course I'm alone - do you think  
 I'd want anyone seeing me speak to  
 you guys?

The three juniors exchange looks, shrug and nod. They relax.

MOIRA  
 (With a big grin to Zinzi)  
 I knew you would come, it was my  
 idea.

ZINZI  
 You give one little finger.

Zinzi looks at Moira, shakes her head and folds her arms across her chest.

ZINZI (CONT'D)  
 What is this about, make it snappy  
 or I'm going to be late for Hockey.  
 And besides this place hones. I  
 mean, seriously?

Moira and Fatima look at Poppy and give her an encouraging nod.

POPPY  
 Well, it's about Jessica.

Zinzi instantly stiffens.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
It's about the fact that she's a  
bully.

Zinzi lets out a laugh and starts walking off. The three girls  
run after her and Moira grabs her arm.

MOIRA  
No please, wait, you have to  
listen.

Zinzi stops, then gives a brief nod.

POPPY  
Jessica controls this school, but  
in a bad mean way. She's always  
putting people down and making them  
feel bad and sad.

ZINZI  
And?

POPPY  
And I think we need to do something  
about it.

Zinzi laughs and shakes Moira off her arm and strides away.

ZINZI  
(Calling back over her  
shoulder)  
Good luck with that!

POPPY  
(Calling after her in a  
rush.)  
She bullies you - I've seen her.  
Putting you down and being mean,  
bossing you and making you sad. She  
does that to everyone and that's  
why she keeps doing it because  
everyone is too scared of her.

Zinzi stops and listens.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
And it's not right and I know you  
know it -  
(Slowing down)  
- or you wouldn't have helped Moira  
with her hair!

Zinzi shakes her head and walks away. Poppy follows a few steps after Zinzi.

Moira deflates and looks at Fatima defeated, hope fading.

FATIMA

Oh well, so we tried. We just going to have to keep out of Jessica's way till the end of the year, it's just a month away and then she'll be leaving.

Moira walks up behind Poppy.

MOIRA

If your parents tell my mom I just know she's going to come charging over to school. And then she'll stage a major protest -

(Moira slumps)

- and then my life as I know it will be over.

POPPY

(With her back to Moira and Fatima)

Don't worry Moi - I'm going to deal with this.

FATIMA

Just leave it Poppy. I mean why is it important now?

POPPY

Because I have a mission to complete.

Poppy walks off leaving Moira and Fatima, they look at each and shake their heads, mystified and concerned.

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE GYM LOCKER-ROOM - DAY

A group of Grade 7 girls emerge from the locker-room, some in school uniform, others in sport outfits, carrying their school bags and game kits. The group includes Jessica, Zinzi and Clarissa. Poppy is waiting further down the corridor.

Poppy waits for them to disperse. She takes a deep breath.

POPPY  
 I can do this. What's the worst  
 thing she can do?  
 (Pausing to think about  
 it)  
 Okay, don't think about it.  
 (Closing her eyes.)  
 This is what I have to do.

Poppy follows Jessica, her knees quaking and her hands shaking.

Jessica stops to adjust her kit bag over her shoulder.

Mid-stride Poppy turns and walks away.

Poppy then stops again, steels herself and turns around and  
 walks slap bang into Jessica!

Jessica narrows her eyes and studies Poppy. Then with a toss of  
 her ponytail she turns and walks away.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 STOP!

Jessica stops and turns around very slowly her eyes wide with  
 disbelief.

JESSICA  
 Ex-ka-use me?

Poppy summons all her courage.

POPPY  
 You have to stop.

Jessica gestures to the fact that she is standing still.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
 No, I mean you have to stop being  
 so mean to me.

JESSICA  
 Mean... moi?  
 (Laughing out loud)  
 Do you hear yourself? It's sooo  
 pathetic, you are such a crybaby  
 Poppy!

POPPY

No, I'm not. And you are being mean to me right now. You are being a bully.

JESSICA

Oh, please, who cares. I have the power and you don't.

POPPY

I'm not scared of you any longer. And every time I see you being mean to someone I'm going to -  
(searching for the right phrase)  
- call you out on it.

JESSICA

Oh really? You and what army?

Making a sweeping gesture to the empty corridor, then nodding triumphantly.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

As I thought. You're on your own, Poppy.

ZINZI (O.S.)

No, she's not.

Jessica looks up and standing behind Poppy is Zinzi. Jessica gives her a 'what the hell?' look.

JESSICA

This is a joke right? You're pranking Poppy?

CLARISSA (O.S.)

No she's not, this is an intervention Jessica.

Jessica spins around to find Clarissa, Moira and Fatima standing behind her.

Poppy does a little double-fisted triumphal pump. Zinzi steps up to Poppy's side.

Clarissa, Fatima and Moira step over to join Zinzi and Poppy.

POPPY

I know you're hurting. But hurting us isn't going to make it better.

ZINZI

And we're not going to let you hurt  
any of us again.

JESSICA

And how you going to do that?

POPPY

We'll get all the children you've  
bullied to stand together.

MOIRA

And that's like most of the school!

CLARISSA

And if we have to, we'll tell our  
parents.

FATIMA

And then they will tell the  
teachers.

Kimera walks around the corner looking for Jessica.

KIMERA

And this?

Kimera assesses the situation.

KIMERA (CONT'D)

Zinzi? You needed to get one grade  
seven loser and three pipsqueaks to  
help you stand up to Jessica? Pa-  
thetic!

Kimera turns to Jessica and links her arm through Jessica's arm  
and walks away with her.

Zinzi, Clarissa, Poppy, Moira and Fatima look to one another,  
unsure if there has been a victory or not.

Zinzi turns to face the group and stretches her hand out palm  
down.

ZINZI

Together?

Clarissa places her hand on top of Zinzi's, then Moira, then  
Fatima and finally Poppy, she looks around the group and nods.

POPPY

Together.



INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - LATER, DAY

Poppy runs into her room, drops her backpack and races over to her bed.

She picks up the St. Bunnychrisp soft-toy and holds him in front of her.

POPPY  
I did it! I did it!

She waits for a response - none comes. Poppy sighs and hugs the toy rabbit to her chest.

SAME, LATER

Poppy is lying in bed. The light is off and the room is lit with light from the street lamps. Poppy has her head on the pillow, eyes closed, and the toy rabbit clutched to her chest.

A LITTLE PRRRPING and CLICKING noise is heard.

POPPY  
(Mumbling in her sleep)  
Good-night Saint Bunny...

Poppy opens her eyes.

Right in front of her on the pillow is Pixel.

Poppy sits bolt upright.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
Pixel.

Pixel does a little bow then holds out her hand.

Poppy gasps, holds out her hand and Pixel's little hand grasps Poppy's finger.

POPPY (CONT'D)  
You're back, oh I was so worried!  
I'm so sorry, I, I...

PIXEL (V.O.)  
Is okay, I is back, Queen Mab, she  
say Poppy make all tings better.  
Queen Mab say Poppy make balance.  
Queen Mab say Pixel is Poppy's  
speshul ting. Queen Mab say Poppy  
come visit on big moon night.

Poppy draws back in wonderment. Here she is in her room, Pixel is back, and best of all, she and Pixel can still communicate!

EXT. POPPY'S SCHOOL - DAY

Insert title: Two months later.

A banner is hanging above the front entrance of the school. It reads "CONGRATULATIONS, FAREWELL AND SAFE JOURNEYS FOR THE FUTURE"

The Grade Sevens (headed by Jessica) are taking leave of the school through a procession of honour formed by the rest of the school pupils.

Streamers are being thrown. Calls of "Good-bye", "Good luck" are called out. Hugs are exchanged between the pupils.

The parents of the Grade Seven pupils wait at the end of the line to receive their children and applaud them as they make their way down the line.

Poppy runs down the outside of the procession and pushes to the end of the line.

Jessica reaches the end of the procession to find Poppy waiting for her.

Jessica pauses and turns to face Poppy.

Poppy reaches into her backpack and pulls out the St. Bunnychrisp toy rabbit.

POPPY

You're going to need a friend when  
you get to Jo'burg.

Jessica laughs and reaches for St. Bunnychrisp.

Beneath Jessica and Poppy's hand a sparkling light runs around St. Bunnychrisp's neck

Jessica strokes St. Bunnychrisp's ears.

Poppy notices that the stitches her mom had used to sew St. Bunnychrisp's head back on are no longer visible.

JESSICA

Thanks, and... I'm sorry.

POPPY

(Nodding)  
You're forgiven.

Poppy watches as Jessica takes off her backpack and puts St. Bunnychrisp carefully in. Jessica closes the flap, puts the backpack back on and walks off.

Poppy watches the backpack, her eyebrows creased together. A pair of white ears pop up, one on each side of the flap. Poppy lets out a gasp of joy.

INT. POPPY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The full-moon is shining through Poppy's bedroom window. The windows are open and a light breeze causes the curtains on either side to move gently in the breeze.

Poppy is sitting cross-legged on her desk in front of the window silhouetted against the moon.

Poppy holds out her hand palm up, Pixel is sitting on it. Pixel rubs her fingers together in excited anticipation.

PIXEL

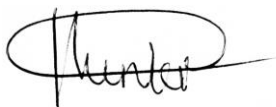
Big-moon night. Poppy ready?

Poppy gives Pixel an eager nod and smile.

FADE TO BLACK.

**CENTRE FOR FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES****CORE COURSE ESSAY COVER SHEET****FULL NAME: Catherine Jane Hunter****STUDENT NUMBER: HNTCAT003****CONTACT NUMBER: 084 900 7597****COURSE CODE: FAM5012W Media Creative Production****TOPIC: Reconciling subconscious inspiration with the work of crafting a screenplay****DUE DATE: 15.02.2016****SEMINAR LEADER/TUTOR: Dr. Alexia Smit****Plagiarism Declaration**

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the Harvard convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in this essay from the work(s) of other people has been acknowledged through citation cited and referenced.
3. This essay is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
5. I have done the word processing and formatting of this assignment myself.
6. I have used a spell and grammar check with a UK language setting before submitting the essay.
7. I have double-checked all proper names and references.

**Signature:****Date: 12.02.2016**

## Reconciling subconscious inspiration with the work of crafting a screenplay

The story for *The Transmogrification of St. Bunnycrisp*<sup>1</sup> came to me as a dream in October 2005. When I woke up and remembered the dream it was so familiar that I was convinced it was a children's book that I had read. I asked various friends if they knew the story and no-one did. I then realized that it was a creation of my subconscious and as I reflected upon it, I knew that it was a story that I wanted to develop into a screenplay. The basic premise of the dream has remained – a mean girl gives a timid girl a soft-toy bunny-rabbit for her 10<sup>th</sup> birthday as an insult that insinuates that she is 'a baby' – that she is 'pathetic' and immature. The soft-toy bunny comes to life as a large and menacing presence that terrorizes the timid girl. The girl, (Poppy Sobukwe), is frightened, but she finds the courage to stand up to him and their relationship begins to transform. They have various adventures in a fantasy realm where she learns to be brave. She befriends her cupboard monster and in return he lets love back into his heart. Through their adventures she gains the courage she will need to stand up to her bully (Jessica) and to find her voice and identity in relation to her mother (Grace).

*The Transmogrification of St. Bunnycrisp* screenplay falls within the Family Fantasy Adventure genre and includes the following tropes: the story starts in the real world (the Symbolic order) with a young girl (aged between 8 and 15 years of age), who feels lonely and misunderstood, as the hero of the story. She is swept into a parallel fantasy realm (the Imaginary order) – the realm of the unconscious where she encounters mythical and archetypal creatures. In the Fantasy world she faces various challenges in which she must use her intelligence and courage to overcome fear and achieve her goal which serves as a rite of passage transitioning the girl from childhood into adolescence. As such the girl hero then returns to her own world with the self-knowledge she has gained from the encounter with the 'shadow realm'. This self-knowledge creates the energy which enables her to move forward in life and overcome the

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<sup>1</sup> The dream did not come with this title but was one that clicked into place later when I realized that I wanted to develop it into a screenplay. The title came from a word guessing game I had played with friends in 1997 and was conceived by John Durno who has given his permission for me to use this phrase as the title of the screenplay and as then name of the character of St. Bunnycrisp. The strangeness and funniness of it had always compelled me and it had stuck in my head and felt like the perfect fit for this story / dream.

initial instigating crisis. While this screenplay would appeal to a family audience is it aimed at the 6 to 12 year old girl.

I wanted to explore the resolution of the instigating crisis in a way that honours the difficulty, in reality, of owning one's courage and voice, overcoming fear and standing up to one's bullies. My screenplay is an exploration of the power of the subconscious to communicate with us and an investigation of how we can bring this in to the conscious to effect change. This exegesis is an exploration of how I reconciled subconscious inspiration with the work of crafting a screenplay.

I do not believe in totalizing theoretical positions and have therefore selected from various writers and philosophers the theories that have resounded with my own experiences. The strategy that I draw upon encompasses two levels of discourse; the **psychoanalytic discourse** and the **social-personal-political** discourse. Both of these discourses work on understanding the 'why', 'wherefore' and 'therefore' – why we think or feel, act or re-act the way we do to a situation. Psychoanalytic discourse operates on the level of the unconscious as it translates itself "into myth, language, and cultural forms"<sup>2</sup> such as my screenplay. The psychoanalytic examines the internal discourse with the subconscious. The social-personal-political is the external dialogue that surrounds us and permeates our internal discourse from the personal (relationships within the immediate circle of influence: family), social (friends, community), political (media, advertising, religion, politics, school) which all come from a particular bias or ideology. Understanding my characters has been a process of coming into dialogue with myself. I have had to act consciously on the story and with the characters to understand what it is that I was trying to communicate with myself. Once I understood who the characters were and what they represented, I have been able to know where the story needed to go in terms of its resolution.

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<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, E. A. 1983. *Mothers and daughters in two recent women's films*: Mulvey/Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1976) and Michelle Citron's *Daughter-Rite* (1978) in *Women and Film: Both sides of the camera*. Routledge: London and New York. p. 173.

In order to help with certain decisions I needed to make regarding plot and story progression I looked at how other films told this type of story. The following films were of greatest influence to me: *Do pivnice / Do sklepa*<sup>3</sup>, *Něco z Alenky*<sup>4</sup>, *Coraline*<sup>5</sup>, *Spirited Away*<sup>6</sup>, *My Neighbour Tortorro*<sup>7</sup>, *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>8</sup>, *The Labyrinth*<sup>9</sup> and *El Laberinto del Fauno*<sup>10</sup>. Although *El Laberinto del Fauno* portrays the trope incredibly powerfully, it is aimed at an adult audience and is rated R for under 17 parental guidance. I have however included it in this list as it has been a strong influence on my screenplay as it gave me the courage to take the story to a dark, gothic space in which to portray the fear and isolation many children experience. The film also differs from the previously listed films where it ends with the little girl dying in the real world and being reborn in the world of myth / fantasy.

Of the previously mentioned films, the work of Czechoslovakia film maker Jan Švankmajer had the most impact on my thinking and as such I will discuss his films *Down to the Cellar* (*Do pivnice / Do sklepa*) and *Something from Alice* (*Něco z Alenky*) or rather - *Alice*. When viewing his films it was as though I was watching some of my own dreams, and I had not had that experience before, of encountering a filmic visual representation of my dream-world. I was particularly interested in the fact that Švankmajer identifies with the little girl as a portrayal of himself – his subconscious, his dream world, creativity, expression – and that childhood is his ‘alter-ego’ which he describes as part of his ‘mental morphology’<sup>11</sup>. František Dryje<sup>12</sup> remarks on this as Švankmajer explicitly attests that *Down to the Cellar* is his most subjective and autobiographical work. My hero Poppy is undoubtedly a portrayal of myself both as ‘inner-

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<sup>3</sup> (*Down to the Cellar*, 1982) – written and directed by Jan Švankmajer.

<sup>4</sup> (*Alice / Something from Alice*, 1987) – written and directed by Jan Švankmajer from the original novel by Lewis Carroll.

<sup>5</sup> (2009) - written and directed by Henry Selick from the original novel by Neil Gaiman.

<sup>6</sup> (2001) – written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki.

<sup>7</sup> (1988) – written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki.

<sup>8</sup> (1939) – written by Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allen Woolf based on the novel by Lyman Frank Baum and directed by Victor Fleming.

<sup>9</sup> (1986) – written by Terry Jones and directed by Jim Henson.

<sup>10</sup> (*Pan's Labyrinth*, 2006) - written and directed by Guillermo del Toro.

<sup>11</sup> O'Pray, M. *Jan Švankmajer: A Mannerist Surrealist* in Hames, P. (Ed.) 2008. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy*. p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> “If this is essentially a childhood memory of Švankmajer, would it not have been more pertinent and more natural to choose a little boy rather than a little girl as the subject of the film (and the object of the attack)?” Dryje, F. *The Force of Imagination* in Hames, P. (Ed.) 2008. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy*. p. 174.

child' and my child self, she is also a portrayal of my subconscious and in particular my subconscious communicating to me what I needed to address and heal. As a female scriptwriter and as a Feminist it is logical that my hero is then a little girl.

In Švankmajer's *Alice* and *Down to the Cellar* the heroines are positioned as agents "of higher imaginative cognition"<sup>13</sup> and the embodiment of the unconscious, whose inner lives merge with their outer world. Švankmajer endows his heroines with what Dryje calls "the force of imagination" which she sees as the strength and advantage of children's perception as they are able to magically unite the Imaginary and the Symbolic<sup>14</sup>. The story of '*The Transmogrification of St. Bunnycrisp*' alternates between the Symbolic and Imaginary worlds. By the end of the film Poppy, through her force of imagination, is able to unite the two worlds in the figure of Pixel. By the end of the story as Poppy has come to face her inner most self and fears, she is able to communicate with Pixel. Pixel acts as the intermediary between the two worlds and is emblematic of Poppy's id – her instinct, that which is ungoverned by intellect and reasoning. It is this same "force of imagination" that I will investigate in my screenplay with regards to the metaphors of characters, the 'magic' that unites the Imaginary and Symbolic orders and the personal revelations they have revealed.

Primarily my intention has become not only to write a screenplay that will have depth and relevance for the audience, but to see the writing of it and the thinking through and researching of the various philosophies as a self-revelatory and healing exercise. Švankmajer states: "Cultivate your creativity as a form of self-therapy. If there is any purpose at all in creativity it is that it liberates us. No film (painting, poem) can liberate a viewer unless it didn't liberate its author first."<sup>15</sup> My dream has been uncanny in its depth and breadth and has slowly delivered its meaning to me as I have worked with it. I will be structuring this discussion as much as possible along the trajectory of the narrative story-line explaining what informed the decisions regarding character and plot along the way.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Hames Appendix One: *Conspirators of Pleasure or Švankmajer's phantom of Liberty*. p. 194.

<sup>14</sup> Dryje, F. *The Force of Imagination* in Hames. p. 174.

<sup>15</sup> From *Decalogue* - Hames, P. Ed. 2008. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. p. 141.



### **The Mother-Daughter Dyad of Poppy and Grace: or learning how to mother myself.**

I shall first focus on Poppy and Grace's relationship as this primary relationship is the basis upon which Poppy's identity rests and within which she is bound and the reason she is an easy target for the "mean queen" at school – Jessica. I have looked at various theories to help me with understanding and defining not only the trajectory of Poppy and Grace's relationship but my relationship with my mother as well; as it is this relationship that is the progenitor of this story. Specifically I have focused on feminist theory in order to move past the Freudian pre-oedipal trajectory as applied to little girls and their mothers.<sup>16</sup> I bring my own subjective research – that of lived experience and knowledge gained through personal psychoanalysis - to this story and dyad so that I may speak of the complexity of the multiplicity of truths that are experienced. I cannot claim to speak on behalf of anyone else but I hope that the depiction of my experiences will resonate with those of other mothers and daughters and may be a source of mirroring from which the audience-spectator may be able to reflect upon their own familial dynamics.

Grace is not simply a representation of my mother as I had first seen her to be; she is the mother I might have been if I had had children without having gone for psychoanalytical therapy. She is therefore me, my mother and my internal mother as the internalized critical parental voice. In turn Poppy is the daughter I might have had, and she is me – she is a manifestation of the subconscious crying out to be heard and the 'internal child' needing to be loved, protected and nurtured. As Hayward explains "[t]he id is the uncontrolled, repressed part of the psyche which the ego, as the consciousness, attempts to control. The super-ego, as the term suggests, attempts to act as a higher-order authority over the id and the ego by trying

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<sup>16</sup> Donna Emmanuel's analysis of various childhood developmental models shows that the understanding of how humans grow and change from infancy to adulthood has changed over time. Emmanuel states that "there have been virtually no studies that have verified Freud's psychosexual stages with behavioral observations" (Knox, 1985 p. 59 – cited in Emmanuel p.2.) and cites numerous articles and studies demonstrating how tenuous Freud's theories regarding female sexuality and development are. (Thompson, 1943; Masters and Johnson, 1966; Stoller, 1968; Fraiberg, 1972; Moulton, 1973; Scherfey, 1973; Parens, Pollack, Stern and Kramer, 1977; Fast, 1978; Chehrizi, 1984; Knox, 1985; Fliegel, 1986; Spieler, 1986; Stiver, 1986 – cited in Emmanuel p.2.) Emmanuel thereby effectively proves that every aspect of the female Oedipus complex has been effectively criticized, using data and methods which did not exist in Freud's lifetime. These data include: "more systematic clinical observations of children; research data on sexuality and gender formation; and the writings of women clinicians" (Stiver, 1986, p. 7– cited in Emmanuel p.2.) Emmanuel, D. 1992. *A Developmental Model of Girls and Women - Progress: Family Systems Research and Therapy*. Volume 1. Encino CA: Phillips Graduate Institute.

to gain a greater critical conscience in relation to the workings of the psyche and to understand them. The super-ego is also identified with the 'parental' voice within the psyche."<sup>17</sup> Therefore the subconscious internal dialogue is between the oppressing critical, negative, punishing voice (ego) – the parent, and the need to be heard, expressed, loved (id) – the child.

My screenplay is primarily speaking from the child's position with Poppy's point of view being the central narrative. At the beginning of the story Poppy and Grace are trapped in imaginary unity with Poppy subconsciously resisting and trying to hold onto a sense of self as separate. In return, Grace responds unconsciously with anger and resistance to Poppy's need to individuate. As Poppy does not yet 'own' her voice, she is initially silent and as Hayward demonstrates "the subject can never fully be represented in speech since speech cannot reflect the unconscious. The subject, in representing the self, can only do so, then, at the cost of division (conscious / unconscious; self / other)"<sup>18</sup> speech therefore betrays us and in resisting it, this is the only form of resistance Poppy can manifest towards Grace, it is therefore a symbolic reflection of the silencing of her individuality.

Psychoanalyst and childhood development theorist Daniel Stern focuses on the interpersonal process between the mother and child. His description of this process is central to my representation of the daughter-mother dynamic in this screenplay. According to Stern, in increasing degrees of complexity as a child grows up, the mother and daughter will bring to their relationship:

[t]heir own subjective inner worlds and the history of their relationship to that point. The child brings to each encounter with the mother her memories, feelings, and expectations which have been formed by countless prior interactions. The mother brings her own memories, feelings and expectations of those same encounters, plus her own personal history and the larger concerns of her current life and relationships.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [Hayward, S. 2006. \*Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition\*. London: Routledge.](#) pp. 274 – 5.

<sup>18</sup> Hayward. p. 283.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Understanding these dynamics, that which we term the 'back-story' of one's characters, means that what is on the page and screen is informed by what is known yet not shown in order to create characters with depth and dimension. The eventual goal for an emotionally healthy and stable sense of identity occurs when a child is able to separate and individuate from the mother. However, when a resistance to this occurs, even if only on an unconscious level; this leads to a child with a fragmented sense of self. This is then the position that Poppy and Grace occupy when we enter their story; that of an undifferentiated relationship.

A mother that holds up an unobtainable ideal denies a child their individual identity; with the result that the child (Poppy) becomes at war with themselves and their mother. A child with a fragmented sense of self does not have defined firm boundaries within which to protect themselves from bullies.

Grace has tried to mold Poppy into the perfect, nice, good girl. That which Jacques Lacan terms the mirror-phase of identification also serves as a symbolic representation of what is an ongoing process; that in order for "growth to take place into a plurality of relations and into the order of civilization and culture" a child (male or female) must be allowed the space to develop their own sense of self away from "the imaginary unity with the mother."<sup>20</sup> The mother-daughter dyad occurs in the misrecognition of the ideal, unified whole which the mother (and in this instance - Grace) holds up. This creates both a "narcissistic moment of self-idealization" which results in misrecognition in self-identification and produces alienation. The child learns how the mother sees it and what she wants from her "the image is conditioned by the mother's look ('I am who my mother desires me to be')."<sup>21</sup> Or rather, this is who I need to be to please my mother. This "imaginary unity" with the mother exists in contradictory relationship to knowledge of the self as separate. Mother and daughter keep mirroring themselves in each other. Kaplan explains how the mother's constant surveillance of the child and her efforts to make them into properly feminine products; result in daughters who remain inside their mother's range of influence. The daughter "will continue to be a part of her mother, body and

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<sup>20</sup> Hayward. p. 276.

<sup>21</sup> Hayward. p. 281.

soul. Instead of her own desires, she must fulfil her mother's wishes"<sup>22</sup>, this then results in the child (daughter – Poppy) feeling an anger which she does not understand, does not recognize and does not yet know how to express.

Dorothy Dinnerstein demonstrates how a child's ambivalent feelings towards the female parent results in a split between the mother as "good" object and "bad" object.<sup>23</sup> The push and pull of a child's feelings towards their mother arise from their need of the mother, fear of abandonment by her, while simultaneously desiring autonomy to gain their own identity. This results in the ambivalence of feelings such as: 'I love you, I hate you'; 'I wish you were dead and I was free of you' and extend to 'I would die without you'. These feelings manifest at various times in the story with Poppy making declarations such as these to Grace – if only to say them out loud to herself. The fear of separation and emotional abandonment may result in rage; this rage becomes masked as guilt and it is turned inwards. The instinctive result of this is hostility towards the mother, which is most often hidden even from the child themselves, and this is reflected in Poppy's silence. Autonomy, separation or detachment is feared as a form of aggression that might harm the mother, thus the anger is concealed and becomes an internal punishing masochistic impulse.<sup>24</sup> As Hendrika Freud points out; "[t]he girl will often feel threatened by her inner maternal image because she fears the revenge of her mother. She can hear her mother say that she is not nice or that she is hurt by her."<sup>25</sup> Both John and Grace comment that Poppy is 'no longer her nice sweet self' when she begins to more determinedly resist and express herself.

The mother within patriarchal society has to enforce the rules in order to maintain her position and to guide her daughter into the hegemony while engendering the same ideas of femininity

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<sup>22</sup> Kaplan. p. 186.

<sup>23</sup> Dinnerstein, D. 1977. *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. New York: Harper. pp. 97– 111. Cited in Kaplan, A. E. (1983) *Mothers and daughters in two recent women's films*: Mulvey/Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1976) and Michelle Citron's *Daughter-Rite* (1978) in *Women and Film: Both sides of the camera*. Routledge: London and New York. 1983. Dinnerstein built her model on the foundations of Melanie Klein's 'good' breast, 'bad' breast separation and individuation theories.

<sup>24</sup> Freud, H.C. 1997. *Electra vs Oedipus: The drama of the mother–daughter relationship*. Published in Dutch as *Electra versus Oedipus, Psychoanalytische Visies op de Moeder-Dochter Relatie*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Van Gennep BV. English translation published in 2011 London: Routledge. p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

that have resulted in the mother's oppression in the first place. These rules are then passed on to the daughter, internalized and then passed along to the daughter's daughter unless conscious intervention occurs. At the end of the story Grace realizes that she has done to Poppy what her mother had done to her, and furthermore that which she had specifically promised herself she would not do. In time this promise has been forgotten, Grace has internalized her mother's voice and has in turn oppressed Poppy with the same patriarchal notions of what an ideal daughter should be – obedient, neat, sweet, conforming.

In the Fantasy world Poppy encounters her mother as the Queen of the forest, this is emblematic of the omnipotent mother; the devouring all consuming, all powerful. For, as Hendrika Freud asserts: "[t]he memory of being mothered ... is so threatening that it has to be repressed, and displaced onto myths that vacillate between hypostatization and romanticization (the myth of the nurturing, ever-present, but self-abnegating figure) and disparagement (the myth of the neglectful, sadistic mother)."<sup>26</sup> These tropes are represented as stereotypes in mainstream (patriarchal) entertainment. The mother-daughter dynamic as experienced by daughters who then become mothers to their own daughters is far more complex and nuanced. The character of Grace is neither self-abnegating nor sadistic – she is merely caught in the web of her own ambivalent mother-daughter relationship which she has transposed onto her daughter.<sup>27</sup> She becomes aware of what she has perpetuated - this is what Hendrika Freud refers to as transgenerational transmission of trauma. The relationship between mothers and daughters facilitates passing on emotional well-being as well as dis-ease; not feeling 'good enough', to the next generation via the female line.<sup>28</sup> I intend to portray the same feminist goals in my filmic discourse as employed by Mulvey/Wollen in *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1976) and Citron in *Daughter-Rite* (1978)<sup>29</sup>. This is to confront the problem of the daughter's relationship with the mother in a way that combines unconscious fears and fantasies with conscious attitudes and reactions.

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<sup>26</sup> Kaplan. p. 173.

<sup>27</sup> Freud H.C p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Freud H.C p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> As discussed in Kaplan, A. 1983. *Mothers and daughters in two recent women's films: Mulvey/Wollen's Riddles of the Sphinx* (1976) and *Michelle Citron's Daughter-Rite* (1978) - *Women and Film: Both sides of the camera* pp. 171 – 181.

In order to understand how to resolve the story and move it forward, I looked towards Janet Surrey's 'Self-in-Relation' theory. Surrey shifts development from a process of separation and autonomy to a process of the self, coming into being within relationship. Back in the Symbolic / real (reel) world; Poppy is initially unable to directly confront her mother and is unable to speak of her distress. Grace has to do what Stern describes as "affect attunement"<sup>30</sup> to reflect upon herself in order to mirror what Poppy is experiencing so that their relationship is released and may continue into a more healthy paradigm – that of self-in-relation. However the starting point for this kind of relationship is predicated on an understanding and knowledge that both mother and daughter have their own boundaries. The mother must realise that her daughter is not an extension of her or a puppet-doll to mould and manipulate into a perfected version of her. For the mother to have a healthy relationship with her daughter she needs to have a healthy relationship with herself. This includes processing feelings that she did not “get enough” from her own mother.<sup>31</sup> The trajectory of the evolution of both Poppy and Grace's character arcs follows this same trajectory – from consuming mother, stuck in the mirror-phase, to separation and individuation – first in the form of the rejection of the other and then to self-in-relation to the (m)other particularly within a “good enough” relationship with self and other.

To allow for the development of mutually empathic relationships Surrey's “**good enough**” mother teaches her daughter attentiveness to other's feeling states, interest in emotional sharing and relating mutually to one another so that in turn the daughter feels more “connected, understood and recognized”. While the mother is being “good enough”, she is teaching the daughter to be “good enough.” For Surrey differentiation is essential in the ‘Self-in-Relation’ developmental model. Differentiation within this model is a process which encompasses increasing levels of articulated choice and complexity which allows for mutual growth without the breaking of emotional ties or in rejecting the ‘other’ to become the ‘self’. In this model self and interdependence exist simultaneously. Grace and Poppy are then able to

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<sup>30</sup> Freud H.C p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Flax, J. 1985. *Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics, and Philosophy*. S&F Online [www.barnard.edu/sfonline](http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline)

move forward into better “self-in-relationship” with themselves and one another. This mutual sharing of experience leads to psychological growth, and will enable the daughter to experience validation of her own developing empathic competence, to feel successful at understanding and giving support at whatever level is appropriate at a particular period of development, and to experience mutual empowerment as they become more adept at accurately responding to each other's feeling states.<sup>32</sup> Through this process Poppy comes to feel empathy for Jessica and is then able to pass on St. Bunnychrisp to her. This act is not only healing for Poppy's relationship with herself, but also for her relationship with Jessica. The ultimate boon is that the action of Poppy's forgiveness and compassion ‘heals’ St. Bunnychrisp and he is released back into the world of the Imaginary where Poppy will be able to have adventures with him once again.

The process I have undertaken in this project, of learning how one childhood developmental theory has led to the development of the next theory, has mirrored my own self-revelatory experience. It has also shown how coming into relationship with oneself and knowledge of one's self is an incremental process reflected in these philosophies that have changed over time as new research-based knowledge has arisen. In the same way, the characters in this screenplay have also slowly revealed who they are as a reflection of myself and have thus served as a mirror. Grace will come to see that what she is doing to Poppy is that which her mother did to her. This realization will set both of them free.

### **Poppy and Jessica – from passive acceptance to active engagement**

Running parallel to the mother-daughter storyline of Poppy and her mother Grace is the storyline of Poppy who is bullied by one of the popular mean-girls at school – Jessica. Due to the undifferentiated relationship between Poppy and Grace, Poppy is left vulnerable to bullying. The family is the first place a child should be taught to stand up for themselves and say ‘no’ without the fear of the world falling apart. At the start of the story Poppy's sense of self, or the right to her own boundaries, is thwarted and undeveloped. The bullying that Poppy experiences are a form of passive-aggressive and subtle psychosocial demeaning; this is most often deployed by girls bullying other girls and is as such hard to pinpoint and call-out. Jessica is

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<sup>32</sup> Surrey cited in Emmanuel. p. 7.

a representation of my sister who was my primary bully in life. My mother did not intervene effectively. The need to take power away from someone else comes about by having power taken away from you. The dynamics of girl-on-girl bullying; how to identify it and how to stand-up to it, is central to the hero's journey narrative of this screenplay.

Barbara Coloroso in *The Bully, The Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School – How parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence* identifies bullying as “a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to do harm, induce fear through threat of further aggression, and create terror”<sup>33</sup>. Bullying will always include the following elements – an imbalance of power (Jessica is a prefect at school), an intent to harm (Jessica means for her actions to hurt Poppy and takes pleasure in witnessing Poppy being hurt, made to feel sad, bad, inadequate, scared, not good enough), a threat of further bullying to come (Jessica maintains a vigil of dominance at school with all the children she bullies knowing that there is more to come) and when bullying is allowed to continue unabated, intimidation is used to maintain the dominance of the bully. The other children are afraid to stand up to Jessica or to stand with their friend against her as they will then become her next target. As Jessica masks this behavior, adults only perceive the facade she shows them – that of the ‘good girl’. She therefore knows that she can continue her actions without threat of recrimination. As we learn, Jessica’s actions are as a result of her home life falling apart and they are the actions of a child lashing out in pain against powerlessness, but this does not make her actions acceptable. As Coloroso identifies; girls bully other girls mostly through verbal and social relational dynamics. Jessica and her friends establish a “pecking order that is clearly delineated”.<sup>34</sup> Jessica works to purposefully ruin friendships in order to isolate her victims in their social world. As Coloroso also demonstrates, there are no innocent bystanders. As Poppy becomes caught up in her adventures with St. Bunnycrisp, Jessica’s actions lose their impact on Poppy – Jessica becomes less important and thus her grip on Poppy is loosened. Within this paradigm bullying Poppy is no longer any ‘fun’ for Jessica as it has no real effect. She then turns to Poppy’s peers. After

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<sup>33</sup> Coloroso, B. 2003. *The Bully, The Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High School – How parents and Teachers Can Help Break the Cycle of Violence*. p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Coloroso. pp. 14 - 15.



returning from the Fantasy world where the children are trapped in the Icemaiden's clutches, Poppy realizes that they will only be free of Jessica's actions if they all stand together. The bravery and courage she has learnt is then put to the test as she has to motivate the children to stand together, and when at first they are too afraid to do so, she has to find the courage to stand up to Jessica on her own.

In identifying the kind of familial environment which either creates a child vulnerable to being bullied, or in which a child might become a bully or how best to bully-proof your child; Coloroso has created an easy to understand terminology of three types of families. In 'brick-wall parenting'<sup>35</sup> (a rigid by the book model of parenting with the 'Law of the Father' being supreme), the child does not have the right to their own 'no'; they therefore do not know how to say 'no' in their social realm. The Sobukwe's are a brick-wall family not out of intent, but as part of transgenerational transmission; as such John and Grace live out how they were parented. They are so busy trying to be perfect parents that they are applying ideology not self-experience. 'Jellyfish parenting'<sup>36</sup> is a system where anything goes; there are no secure boundaries which the child can model as a system of behavior. Jessica comes from a 'jellyfish home' where her parents are more interested in their own needs being fulfilled than those of their children. A child from a 'jellyfish' home does not have their needs addressed or acknowledged. Coloroso's solution is that which she terms 'backbone families'<sup>37</sup> that allow for secure boundaries, a strong sense of self and a flexible way of interrelating with family and peers. A 'backbone family' is a family that practices the theory of 'good enough' parenting for both the parents and the child(ren). This is the family that the Sobukwe's will need to become – a family that listens and hears and does not just apply rules and regulations. Hopefully how John and Grace finally respond and listen and then enact solutions with Poppy will provide inspiration for how the viewing audience might approach similar dynamics within their family.

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<sup>35</sup> Coloroso. p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Coloroso. p. 85.

<sup>37</sup> Coloroso. p. 91.

In this screenplay I wanted to tell a story about girls being bullied by other girls and how cruel and demoralising this is. I did not want to trivialise or give 'candy-coated' resolutions. Bullying is a complex issue and not just a straight perpetrator-victim dynamic. The 'victim' is not only made powerless by the bully, but also by their peers and the adults in charge. Often the 'victim' is someone whom it is socially sanctioned to victimise – the 'nerd', 'wimpy' or 'outsider' kid – the 'other'. I wanted Poppy to start as the 'wimpy' kid and then to go through pain, isolation and finally anger. Girls are so often taught to deny their anger, to push it down. My therapist counsels that depression is anger turned inwards. She cautions that it is not anger that is negative, but what we do with that anger: negative if we turn it inwards on ourselves, negative if we use it to hurt another person; positive if we use it as a source of energy to create change, positive if we use it as energy or fuel to power us through our fear into action. If we do not teach children to validate and stand up for themselves, if we tell girls to be 'good' and 'nice' or to 'turn the other cheek', we are culpable in leaving them vulnerable to attack. Many forms of social authority structures sanction bullying as a means of maintaining authority while keeping people submissive and obedient. Bullying is something that can be overcome, but only as a group effort, starting with empowering the individual, working as a family unit, and standing together as a social or community unit.

### **The role of the subconscious in self-narration**

Through the mirror-phase and the emergence into language, a child is able to begin to objectify themselves. Donna Emmanuel demonstrates that this stage builds a capacity for the child to now "transcend immediate experience" and build "the psychic mechanisms and operations to share their interpersonal world knowledge and experience, as well as to work on it in imagination or reality ... In line with psychodynamic thinking, children can now wish that reality were something it is not."<sup>38</sup> In other words, fantasy, imagination and the subconscious can be used as tools in which the child can now devise an alternate reality. This leads to the role that fantasy and imagination plays in the self-narrative. The "narrative self" is an extension of the verbal or language based self through which the child "tells a story about herself to someone

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<sup>38</sup> Emmanuel. pp. 5 - 6.

else".<sup>39</sup> Stern believes that the "narrative self" is the "laboratory for self-identity"; this becomes an internal space in which who we are as opposed to whom our parent figure wants us to be can emerge and evolve. This may begin in the subconscious through dreams, but in reflecting on our dreams we can bring the process into consciousness through self-narration.

Verbalization releases one into action and being. This process and the various levels of self-in-relation simultaneously and continuously evolve through adolescence and adulthood. Grace does not listen to the greater "self-narrative" Poppy is telling her with regards to the manifestation of St. Bunnycrisp in her life. Grace works as a social worker dealing with children who have 'real monsters' in their lives. As such she dismisses Poppy's stories out of hand as childish, thereby effectively shutting Poppy up in her waking nightmare. John is a human right's lawyer who also deals with 'real monsters'; Poppy feels her issues insignificant in comparison – and that the last two people she can turn to for help or to hear her are now her parents. The scenario I am depicting is that of a form of 'doctor heal thyself' as their first priority should be in protecting their own child.

Fantasy is inextricably linked with desire - what we want for ourselves; and at the level of the child that is to be loved for one's self (in the patriarchal this love is to come from the mother) and to be protected (which in patriarchal ideology is the realm of the father). Fantasy according to Lacan is located in the Imaginary that is, the unconscious. Fantasy, then, is the conscious articulation of desire, through either images or stories<sup>40</sup>. Fantasy films are:

[J]ourneys to improbable places and meetings with implausible 'creatures'... Fantasy films are about areas 'we don't really know about' and, therefore, areas we do not see as real. However, fantasy is the expression of our unconscious, and it is these films in particular that most readily reflect areas we suppress – namely, the realms of our unconscious and the world of our dreams.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hayward. p. 94.

<sup>41</sup> Shera, P. A. 2001. *The Labyrinthine Madness of Švankmajer's Faust*. Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2001. p. 93.

It then follows that cinema as a storytelling device calls upon the structures of our own unconscious. As Freud demonstrated; storytelling is a child's way of dealing with fear, anxiety and dependency; most particularly those fears that focus on the mother.<sup>42</sup>

In researching the films of Czech Surrealist Jan Švankmajer, I learnt that he consistently returned to his obsession with childhood and its forms of representation which include "tales of the imagination which often use fear, horror and anxiety"<sup>43</sup>. Through the process of psychoanalysis I have come to realize that I have lived most of my life in a state of fear and anxiety. Švankmajer's short film *Down to the Cellar* had its origins in the Czech Surrealist Group Collective's thematic project: *Inquiry on Fear (Anketa o strachu, 1978)* and is as such an exploration of fear, in particular the fears that dominate us in our childhood.<sup>44</sup>

The latent world, the origin of dreams in which human experience and imagination combine; and for Švankmajer his imagination and childhood obsessions, are his most important creative tools – he sees them as vital springs from which to draw.<sup>45</sup>

Švankmajer's oneiric films are a dialogue with his childhood and are concerned with making the real imaginary and the imaginary real; as Švankmajer states: "[i]magination is subversive, because it puts the possible against the real."<sup>46</sup> He draws on unrestricted imaginary play, the grotesque, the carnivalesque, the absurd, the uncanny and black humour.<sup>47</sup> He is serious about play and childhood believing that "[a]rt for children' is dangerous in that it shares either in the taming of the child's soul or the bringing up of consumers of mass culture"<sup>48</sup>. His films are therefore not films for children but for the child within the adult – to assist us to reconnect with our childhood and to tap into a child's "system of wisdom"<sup>49</sup> and the unconscious. Dryje explains creation as a reaction between unconscious motivations and painful emotions, "[t]he

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<sup>42</sup> Hayward, p. 96.

<sup>43</sup> O'Pray, M. *Jan Švankmajer: A Mannerist Surrealist* in Hames, p. 65.

<sup>44</sup> Dryje, p. 173.

<sup>45</sup> Motycka Weston, p. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Jan Švankmajer quoted from *Decalogue* in Hames, P. (Ed). 2008. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Hames, p. 36 & p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> Jan Švankmajer quoted in Hames, P. 2002. *Bringing up Baby* - interview with Peter Hames. *Kinoeye*, vol. 2, no. 1, 7 January 2002, <http://www.kinoeye.org/02/01/hames01.php>

<sup>49</sup> Richardson, M. 2006. *Surrealism and cinema*. p. 131.

force of imagination feeds off the energy of conflicts which cannot be consciously controlled and which also defy labelling.”<sup>50</sup> Dreams represent another form of language; one which Anne Kaplan believes is unmediated by patriarchal discourse.<sup>51</sup> Švankmajer aims to “liberate us precisely from those domesticating habits that our civilization drums into us from childhood”<sup>52</sup> with Švankmajer perceiving his film work as being an attempt at release from fear and anxiety both internal and external<sup>53</sup> - the internal being psychoanalytic discourse and the external social-personal-political discourse.

*Něco z Alenky (Something from Alice)*<sup>54</sup> begins with a voice-over from Alice announcing: “First you must close your eyes, or you won’t see anything” thus signaling to us that we must adjust our vision and perception, that what we will see is an internal vision. This is Švankmajer instructing us to “[k]eep exchanging dreams for reality and vice versa.”<sup>55</sup> He believes that there are no logical transitions; “only one tiny physical act that separates dreams from reality: opening or closing your eyes. In daydreaming even that isn’t necessary.”<sup>56</sup> The dream and the world of the subconscious allow Alice to explore not only fear and anxiety but ways of overcoming these through disruption and disobedience – exacting her own will. Michael O’Pray sees Alice as “a child under threat by her own fantasies”<sup>57</sup>, but I see her as consciously engaging with the fears that threaten her – these would include what it is to be a good and conforming girl. Alice refuses to be bound by these fears; she pushes up against them and topples them over. The film represents the story of Alice as a rite of passage in which she dies to her old self and is

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<sup>50</sup> Dryje. p. 172.

<sup>51</sup> Kaplan. p. 174.

<sup>52</sup> Švankmajer cited in Dryje, F. & Schmitt, B. (Eds.) 2012. *Short anthology of the writings by Jan Švankmajer*. In *Jan Švankmajer: Dimensions of Dialogue / Between Film and Fine Art*. p. 447.

<sup>53</sup> Švankmajer cited in Hames p. 156.

<sup>54</sup> Švankmajer makes clear in his title that he is not adapting Carroll’s original *Alice in Wonderland*, but is taking inspiration from it. However as Hames demonstrates it is surprisingly faithful to the intent of the original providing a powerful interpretation of what was also Carroll’s (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) dream in the first place. Hames, P. 2008(b). *The core of reality: puppets in the feature films of Jan Švankmajer*. In *The cinema of Jan Švankmajer: dark alchemy*. p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> Švankmajer, J. *Decalogue* in Hames, P. (Ed.) 2008. *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Great Britain: Wallflower Press.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> p. 66 Michael O’Pray – Jan Švankmajer: A Mannerist Surrealist (in Hames)

reborn with new self-knowledge<sup>58</sup>. For Švankmajer the terrors of our childhood are never overcome as they remain with us and affect our adult life. Therefore it is imperative to return to them in order to evaluate their continuing effects<sup>59</sup>. From being a victim of imagination she progresses to a stage where the imagination is controlled. Thus we may see in *Down to the Cellar* a passive acceptance of imagination (and engaging with fear) to becoming aware of the 'other' world in *Alice* (the dream-world) to controlling or utilizing the gift of imagination (the subconscious) which is my objective for Poppy. Once a heroine progresses to the stage of communicating with the sources of imagination (her subconscious) she is no longer a victim of her fear: on the contrary, she may draw strength from them.<sup>60</sup>

As Hames demonstrates, Švankmajer's feature films establish the point that the dream cannot be ignored. When Alice awakens in her nursery she finds all her toys and the objects she encountered in the dream are back in their place but for the White Rabbit. His case is empty – the subconscious has been liberated and this is evidence of the reality of her experience.<sup>61</sup> This blurring of the dividing lines between fantasy and reality by Švankmajer<sup>62</sup> is something I have deliberately engaged with in *The Transmogrification of St. Bunnychrisp*. I wanted to portray the intensity of Poppy's psychological experience to the point where she questions not only her reality but also her sanity. She has passed the age where she believes in fairy tales but not yet past the phase where one still feels that there might be a menacing presence under the bed, in the cupboard, in the dark, in the attic or basement. These spaces elicit primal fears in us - just as much as they may be symbolic of portals where we may enter into the shadow realms; they are also spaces through which we may be devoured - consumed by our own fear.

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<sup>58</sup> This is enacted in a scene where Alice is pursued (in her doll form) by Hieronymus Bosch-like creatures of the underworld. They capture her and push her into a bowl of Plaster of Paris where she becomes encased in a doll-like sarcophagus. She literally becomes a *Frozen Charlotte* doll. She is then placed in this form in the pantry which I equate to the idea of the alchemist's laboratory of self-knowledge; a place of storage of fertile powers filled with the sustenance of imagination. She erupts from this form like a chrysalis emerging from a cocoon. She emerges once more as her full human bodied self in an enactment of the sacred initiation – from life through dying to re-birth as the metaphor of the dream or initiation rituals through which one becomes dead to your past life.

<sup>59</sup> Richardson, M. *Jan Švankmajer and the Life of Objects. Surrealism and Cinema*. p. 124.

<sup>60</sup> Hames, P. *Interview with Jan Švankmajer*. p. 133.

<sup>61</sup> Hames, P. *The Core of Reality: Puppets in the Feature Films of Jan Švankmajer*. p. 98

<sup>62</sup> Hames, P. *Interview with Jan Švankmajer*. p. 124

We live in a world where the majority of the population still believes intrinsically in some form of religious mythology. We are taught to believe in entities such as holy spirits, demons, devils and angels. Even so, the manifestation of a large talking rabbit would challenge the belief of anyone and yet there are traces of evidence for Poppy that what she is experiencing is real. Jane Flax<sup>63</sup> in her paper *Discourse on Method*, lays out the problem of the "cogito" ("I think, therefore I am") which emerges in relation to the problem of "distinguishing reality from a dream." In *Communicating Vessels*, Breton states that surrealism strives to "cast a conduction wire between the far too distant worlds of waking and sleep, exterior and interior reality, reason and madness."<sup>64</sup> Peta Allen Shera says of the Surrealists that one of the movement's strongest urges "is to speak the ambiguity, if not the impossibility, of differentiating between sanity and madness."<sup>65</sup> As St. Bunnycrisp makes his presence felt Poppy questions what is real or even if she is real, if she is sleeping and dreaming, if her eyes are closed or open. This is a by-product of not having felt quiet real yet herself, that she is of her mother's making – a living talking doll. While she is still a child who has the ability to communicate with the world of myths and archetypes and is driven mostly by "the instinct of imagination"<sup>66</sup>. The manifestation of St. Bunnycrisp in her life is initially beyond her belief and leads her to doubt her own sanity; Poppy thus experiences an existential crisis.

Švankmajer focuses on the spiritual essence of Surrealism and describes it as a "journey into the depth of the soul, like alchemy and psychoanalysis."<sup>67</sup> Andre Breton speaks of connecting with the subconscious as like seeing "flashes from the lost mirror"<sup>68</sup> the lost mirror being the connection with our inner subconscious world – fantasy, imagination and dreams then are a mirror of the real world and film is a form of dream. As such the various beings Poppy encounters along the way are reflections of people she knows in the 'real' world. The Queen of

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<sup>63</sup> Flax, J. 1985. *Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics, and Philosophy*. S&F Online [www.barnard.edu/sfonline](http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline)

<sup>64</sup> Breton, A. 1992. *Communicating Vessels*. Translated by Caws, M.A. and Harris, G.T. 1997. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. p. 86.

<sup>65</sup> Shera. p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> Hames. *Appendix Two : Otesánek within us*. p. 193.

<sup>67</sup> Hames. *Interview with Jan Švankmajer*. p. 112.

<sup>68</sup> Breton, A. from *Ascendant Sign*. p105 cited in Noheden. p. 12.

the Forest is Grace, St. Bunnycrisp is her father, the Icemaiden is Jessica, the masked children are her friends at school and Pixel is symbolic of Poppy's id.

Elizabeth Cowie asserts that "[i]t is perhaps only the most reworked, conscious daydream that is able to impose the stabilization of the ego, so that the subject's position is clear and invariable as the 'I' of the story, which the subject as it were 'lives out'."<sup>69</sup> Roberto Calasso attests that when we enter the mythical, we enter the realm of risk and that myth – the story we tell ourselves; "is the enchantment we generate in ourselves at such moments."<sup>70</sup> As such *The Transmogrification of St. Bunnycrisp* is part of my personal mythology. As Hugo Münsterberg described, cinema is not filmed reality "but a psychological and aesthetic process" that reveals our inner "mental experiences."<sup>71</sup> When speaking of Švankmajer, Dryje describes the dream as an "irreplaceable imaginative phenomenon, and therefore not a mere object of knowledge but knowledge itself"<sup>72</sup>. The dream is therefore an essential creative tool for me, the story arrived as a dream, I have day-dreamed it further and then also engaged in conscious wrangling with it to see where it would take me. As Dryje further attests, the dream is not only a "source of inspiration but also an imaginative process in its own right". While she is speaking of Švankmajer these statements are also directly reflective of the process with which I have engaged the dream. The dream is not only personal; it is part of the collective unconscious. Dreams represents the transience of life, dream is where we begin to create the myths through which we make sense of who we are and why we are here and what our purpose is. Both dream and film are about making meaning and at the same time they express the clash between reality and dream, realism and expressionism.

As a screenplay writer one does not get to dictate the terms of what the images look like on screen. However I continuously visualize the story in my head as I am writing it in order to get it onto the page. I was first a painter before turning to screenwriting and one of the reasons I

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<sup>69</sup> Cowie, E. 1990. from *Fantasia* in *Contemporary Film Theory*. London and New York: Longman Critical Readers. p. 149

<sup>70</sup> Calasso, R. 1994. *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*. London: Vintage Books. p. 278.

<sup>71</sup> Hayward. p. 381.

<sup>72</sup> Dryje. *The Force of Imagination*. p. 155.



switched over was that my paintings never fully expressed the image that was in my head. It took me a long time to realize that the image in my head was a 'moving' picture that encompassed storylines and that what I was seeing were actually clips from a film narrative. However the Cape Town based painter Peter van Straten's paintings manage to capture within a single image the feeling of a dream world, and in particular come closest to the my internal day-dream world. Van Straten describes his work as *Magic Realist* and it is that same concept I would like to carry across in the story of St. Bunnychrisp and Poppy – that anything might be possible and that magic can pop up in the midst of the mundane. This is what St. Bunnychrisp brings to Poppy's life; he transforms the world around her into a magic realm.

The world of the Icemaideen is created around the forces of childhood fear and anxiety. It is a Gothic world filled with strange creatures and monsters that have been distorted by emotion. The grotesque is the subconscious world that is frightening to children. Rosemary Jackson describes the grotesque as "the estranged world, our world, which has been transformed"<sup>73</sup> to this I add that the grotesque is the expression of all the 'dark' feelings which most often get repressed. The grotesque is sinister, exaggerated, caricatured and blends the humorous with the horrific, it is a world that embodies destruction and decay.<sup>74</sup> Eris Silke's mixed media artworks capture the feeling of the grotesque, of threat, of powerlessness that imbues the Icemaideen's world. Silke peoples her world with doll-like girls and animals from fables and fairy tales such as the white rabbit and the wolf. There is an ominous oppressive crowdedness in her compositions with settings and details echoing that of Gothic Victoriana. It is the imagery in her artworks that have inspired the banquet hall scene in the Icemaideen's castle. The Gothic and grotesque atmosphere of the Icemaideen's realm is a mirror to the painful truth that childhood is not always a happy place; but a place where children are often required to mask their unhappiness and put on a smiling face for the world to see. Furthermore the masks the children wear at the banquet represent the claustrophobic oppression of individuality through the force of conformity.

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<sup>73</sup> Jackson, R. 1981. *Fantasy: the literature of subversion*. London: Methuen, p. 68. cited in O'Pray, M. *Surrealism, Fantasy and the Grotesque: The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer*. in Donald, J. (ed.) 1989. *Fantasy and the Cinema*. London: British Film Institute. p. 256.

<sup>74</sup> O'Pray. p. 258.

It was only in discussion with my supervisor, Dr Alexia Smit, in August of this year, that I came to the realisation that St. Bunnycrisp was a manifestation of my father. This proved crucial for shifting emphasis in the script and resolving areas that had reached a cul-de-sac of sorts. While I knew what happened with Poppy and St. Bunnycrisp's storyline; and Poppy and Jessica's storyline; where it started, what would happen in the middle, and where it would go in the third act, I had not yet resolved the storylines of Poppy and Grace or Poppy and John. For a long time I was unresolved about how much weight to give the storyline of the adults; how much emphasis, how much screen time etc. My relationship to my father was a very close one, but complicated. He had been 'the monster' in the family with a terrible temper. I am 10 and 8 years younger than my brother and sister, whom he used to beat if they tripped his temper; obedience had to be absolute – a 'brick-wall father'. I took it upon myself to make my world and those in it with me, safe. So from a very young age, at least by the age of three, I learnt how to step in and 'tame the beast'. Therefore when Dr Smit pointed out that St. Bunnycrisp was the mirror figure of John in the dream world, it all suddenly clicked into place – after all the character of John is a lawyer – as was my father. As Švankmajer would probably have guided me – I decided to investigate this relationship as a means of self-revelation.

I realized that I had made John an idealized figure and as both Jane Flax and Anne Kaplan point out, the idealized father figure is often outside of the intense mother-daughter relationship, looking in.<sup>75</sup> The story begins with the celebration of Poppy's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday and her mother has pulled out all the stops for it to be a 'perfect' event. The occasion is photographed / filmed by Poppy's father John – this is a distancing mechanism symbolic of the father outside of the mother - daughter relationship looking in. Flax asserts that the daughter sees the father as the gatekeeper to both autonomy and the outside, non-familial world. "The girl attempts to direct herself to her father when he is available. If not, she must make do with her fantasies"<sup>76</sup> and St. Bunnycrisp is Poppy's (and of course my) fantasy world version of John / my father. He first appears as a terrifying, menacing and disciplinarian figure. But Poppy finds the courage to stand

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<sup>75</sup> Kaplan. p. 188

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

up to him (as did I), they start to become friends and it emerges that his role is to come to the human world to scare children who are bullies so that they get a taste of their own medicine and change their ways. This too is a mirror reflection of the roll of John as a human-rights lawyer. St. Bunnycrisp thinks that he has been sent to scare Poppy – but soon realises she is terrified of him. To make amends for scaring her he takes her on adventures to his world – which is against the rules. St. Bunnycrisp and Poppy become friends and he observes how Jessica bullies Poppy. It dawns on him that maybe he has been assigned to the wrong child and that he was meant for Jessica. After this realisation St. Bunnycrisp and Poppy conspire to get him back into Jessica’s hands, and in order to do so he needs Poppy’s help. There are definite ‘rules of reality’ that govern the ways that St. Bunnycrisp may be made manifest in the real world. Only Poppy sees him in his 6 foot tall live form, they can talk to each other in her head through a little bug he puts in Poppy’s ear. At first she can go to his world in her head. But after he gets his head torn off – he no longer appears to Poppy. She is devastated until her pet Pixel shows her the way – thus she allows her instinct to guide her.

As obvious as it now seems to me, it was only when watching Jan Švankmajer’s *Něco z Alenky* (*Alice / Something from Alice*, 1987) that I made the connection between the story of *Alice in Wonderland* and Poppy and St. Bunnycrisp – of a girl following a white rabbit into the realm of the subconscious. While I had read *Alice in Wonderland* as a child and have seen various film versions, I had also adored the picture story-books of *Pookie the Rabbit*, but the manifestation of this large menacing white rabbit in my dream – where did he come from in that form? I had never seen the film *Harvey* but I had seen *Donny Darko*. In 2010 a fellow writer introduced me to the Irish Pooka as she felt that St. Bunnycrisp was a manifestation of this mythical being<sup>77</sup>. Once I began to research what a Pooka was, it was amazing to see how many of their characteristics were manifest in St. Bunnycrisp’s persona. A Pooka / Púca<sup>78</sup> is a shape-shifting trickster – an ambiguous character with a flexible notion of the truth – it simply isn’t interesting for him, mostly he is interested in mischief and mayhem. The rabbit as a shape-shifter and

<sup>77</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%BAca>

<sup>78</sup> An internet search for the Púca turns up many variations of the spelling including Phooka / Pooka / Puca / Puka / Phouka and of course Puck.

trickster occurs in many cultures including various African mythologies as Mzingo Tembo attests; “[t]ricksters occur in tales from the West, East, Central, and Southern African people. The Hare is the most prominent trickster among peoples of East, Central and Southern Africa”<sup>79</sup> Pookas are one of the most feared faeries in Ireland. They come out at night, they hide in the shadows calling out your name, inviting you to come on adventures with them, to ride on their back and fly through the air. Like all Pookas St. Bunnycrisp is a great listener and can persuade people to tell them their most protected secrets. But, there is a cautionary side to tales of the Pooka - if you refuse the Pooka, like all fairies, he is liable to become vindictive. Through the course of time the Pooka became the Booga and then the Bogeyman, a story to tell children to make them behave. “Be a good girl or the Bogeyman will come and carry you away.” The Pooka became the monster under the bed, in the shadows and in the closet. This is how we meet St. Bunnycrisp, but just as he helps Poppy to find courage, be brave and stand up for herself; she brings kindness, compassion and love back to his heart – she transmogrifies St. Bunnycrisp.

In Mark Cousin’s documentary; *The story of film*, there is an interview with Australian filmmaker Jane Campion. Campion, who is one of my favourite filmmakers, speaks about the film world still being dominated by male writers and directors. As such she feels that 50% of the world’s population – girls and women, are not seeing their stories being told. She also speaks about strength and gentleness as a female writer and film maker and that one has to give the unconscious a safe space to come out and play – ‘like a shy, timid scared pet’<sup>80</sup>; Poppy is my ‘rabbit-hearted girl’<sup>81</sup> self who I have had to coax out of my subconscious in order to communicate with me. At the beginning of this exegesis I commented that the list of films I chose to look at were all written and directed by men but all involved the trope of the young girl hero. What these films do not show or deal with is the mother-daughter relationship – the

<sup>79</sup> Tembo, M. 1996. *Myths of the World: Legends of Africa*. p. 17.

<sup>80</sup> Jane Campion interview with Mark Cousins. Cousins, M. 2012. *The story of film: an odyssey*. [DVD] Produced by the British Film Institute, Film4 and Hopscotch Films; in association with UK Film Council and More 4. London.

<sup>81</sup> This phrase comes from lyrics in the song [Rabbit Heart \(Raise It Up\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_and_the_Machine) off the album *Lungs* by Florence and the Machine released on 22 June 2009 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence\\_and\\_the\\_Machine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_and_the_Machine). The song was written by Florence Welsh and references *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* and also speaks of finding the courage to overcome fear.

mother is made absent. Secondly they do not show how the instigating incident is resolved post the journey into the mythic underworld. I believe that the focus I bring to both these aspects makes my story more powerful and relevant.

If we are to break free from the patriarchally defined damaging self-narratives of our pasts, then we need to actively position ourselves as creators of new meaning. In presenting an on-screen depiction of the mother-daughter dyad I am not only working through my own self-narrative but hoping that this will create a space where the spectator may either position themselves as the daughter “identifying with and possibly spurred to reflect on her own daughter–mother interactions: or the spectator perceives the interweaving of the tracks, with their distinct levels of discourse, as an invitation to meditate on what the voices and images reveal: here, the spectator is encouraged to become a “spectator– therapist”<sup>82</sup>, to participate and verbalize how it is for them. Engaging consciously with my dream and my subconscious through psychoanalysis, writing and reflection and questioning the narrative of this screenplay has allowed the story to open up and reveal its hidden meanings. As inspired by Švankmajer, this has allowed for my creative process to become a means of self-reflection, revelation and healing.

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<sup>82</sup> Kaplan. p. 185.

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